DAYANAND
A STUDY IN HINDUISM

BAHADUR MAL

1962

FIRST EDITION

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SARVADANAND UNIVERSAL SERIES

ITS DEDICATION

1. *Swami Sarvadanand Ji*

Swami Sarvadanandji, to whose sacred memory the present series is dedicated, was born in 1859 at Bari Basi, a small town near Hoshiarpur in the Panjab. He came of a family that had already produced a number of learned scholars and able physicians. He received his school education at Hariana, being another small town at some distance from his birth-place. From his early life, he felt great interest in religious observances and a strong urge for associating himself with saintly persons, devoted to religion. He married, but his household life was cut short, soon after, by the death of his wife. He did not marry a second time, for his keen interest in the pursuit of religion led him, instead, to leave his hearth and home for good so that he might be able to move about freely in search of true saints who could guide him on that path. It was in the course of those wanderings that he once came into contact with a follower of Swami Dayanandji and had from him the gift of a copy of *Satyartha-Prakasa* (Light of Truth), the well-known master-piece from the pen of the said master-mind. Through the study of that classic, he was moved to the innermost recesses of his heart and, under that inspiration, set out on a life-long mission of selfless service of

humanity. For full forty-six years, right up to the end of his earthly sojourn which he reached in 1942, he moved on from place to place, preaching through his own conduct, the importance of right thought and deed. He loved all alike but extended his warm embrace, particularly, to Harijans, being the down-trodden of the caste hierarchy. The caste people hurled at him, out of spite, the nickname of 'Chamaraguru' (Teacher of Cobblers), which he accepted as a compliment.

2. *The Memorial.*

Swami Sarvadanandji was associated with our Institute organisation as a Founder Trustee and an Executive Member. He took keen interest in its work and did all he could to help this cause. It was as an humble expression of its gratitude for that long and valuable association that the Institute decided to set up, in his sacred momory, a department of universal cultural study and publication. A special fund to the tune of over Rs. 60,000/- was raised by public subscription for this purpose by the middle of 1947. But, soon after, the Institute suffered, in the wake of the Partition of Panjab, a huge loss of its assets worth several lakhs of rupees. Since then, it has settled down at Hoshiarpur where it has made strenuous efforts towards its rehabilitation. When, in 1950, it succeeded in setting up its new printing press, it duly accorded top priority to the establishment of the aforesaid memorial department and started the present series under the auspices of the same. Thirty-nine volumes have been issued in this series before the present one which is the fortieth.

3. *The Present Work*

Principal Bahadur Mal is already known to the readers of this series through four previous works by his pen, namely, *Mental Health in Theory and Practice*, *A Story of Indian Culture*, *The Religion of the Buddha and its Relation to Upanishadic Thought* and *Shri Krishna, His Philosophy and His Spiritual Path* which have been published herein as the Volumes XII, XVIII, XXVII and XXXIV respectively. In his present book, the learned author has, in a very successful and refreshing manner, described the essential picture of modern Hinduism against its historical background and very correctly shown the place that Swami Dayanand Saraswati's great personality and work occupies therein.

4. It is my pleasant duty to close this note with an expression of my sincere thanks to my colleagues in the Publication and the Printing Departments of our Institute through whose hearty co-operation this volume is now seeing the light of the day.

VISHVA BANDHU

Sadhu Ashram,
HOSHIARPUR,
6th March, 1962.

PREFACE

My aim, in writing this book, is to present Swami Dayanand as a great reformer who made a most notable contribution to modern Hinduism. He was, perhaps, the first great Indian who made it clear that the various unwholesome social and religious beliefs and practices, prevalent amongst the Hindus, were not an essential and inseparable part of Hinduism, as it had come to be believed by foreign scholars and by most Indians themselves. He gave a fresh interpretation of Hinduism in the light of its ancient Vedic phase.

The introductory chapter attempts a rather elaborate account of Hinduism as it has prevailed from the beginning of Christian era right down to the present times. It provides a background for understanding the contribution which Swami Dayanand has made to the revitalization of Hinduism. In the last chapter the nature of Hinduism has been discussed to bring out its fundamental character. It is so unlike the ordinary conception of religion, being without a historical founder, a common scripture, a common form of prayer, or even a definite conception of God.

The chapters in-between give a short biography of Dayanand, an exposition of his religious, philosophical, social and political views, and an elucidation of the principles on which he founded the great organization of the Arya Samaj.

It is the author's conviction that Swami Dayanand did not want the Arya Samaj to be a sect among other sects of Hinduism. It was to be a reforming body with which all people imbued with a zeal for reform

and a spirit of selfless service could associate themselves. He made the principles of Arya Samaj wide and catholic, so that all persons could become its members while maintaining their freedom of thought in matters on which the principles are silent.

That Swami Dayanand did not make it obligatory upon the members of Arya Samaj to accept all his views on various subjects becomes clear from the fact that he distinguished the principles of the Arya Samaj from his own views which he summarised at the end of his great book, the *Satyarth Prakash*, and which he described as Svamantavya or his personal convictions. One could differ from Dayanand in respect of a number of things without ceasing to be an Arya Samajist, provided that one accepted the ten principles. It is necessary to lay stress to this aspect of Dayanand's teaching, which is sometimes not given due importance.

The book has grown around the nucleus of three lectures by the author, on the teachings of Swami Dayanand, which were published by the D.A.V. College, Sholapur, under the auspices of Sain Dass Foundation Lectures. I am grateful to Principal Sri Ram for allowing me to include them in this book. I am very much indebted to Dr. Kane's monumental work on Dharma Shastras, and to Shri Har Bilas Sharda's voluminous biography of Swami Dayanand for some of the material used in writing this book. I also thank Shri Mahendra Kulasrestha for reading the proofs and for seeing the book through the press.

HOSHIARPUR
1. 3. 1962.

BAHADUR MAL

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Introduction

SWAMI DAYANAND was a great social and religious reformer of modern India. When he began his work in the latter half of nineteenth century, Hinduism had lost its old vigour and was practically in a moribund condition. All sorts of evils had crept into Hindu society. The old fervour of the ancient Aryans was gone and a spirit of indolence, lethargy and fatalism had taken its place. Things have greatly changed since then. We find unmistakable signs of awakening in present-day Hinduism. It can be said with definiteness that Swami Dayanand played a most important part in Hindu renaissance in the modern period. As Romain Rolland puts it, "Dayanand transfused into the languid body of India his own formidable energy, his certainty, his lion's blood. His words rang with heroic power." Before, however, we dwell on the contribution made by Dayanand to modern Hinduism, it would be worthwhile to get an idea of the religious and social conceptions and practices that prevailed among the Hindus at the beginning of the modern period.

PAURANIK HINDUISM

The Hindu religion as it was prevalent at the time when Swami Dayanand began his work was what may be called Pauranik Hinduism. The Puranas had practically taken the place of the Vedas and the Upanishads as

religious scriptures of the Hindus, though, of course, in the performance of various religious ceremonies, the Vedic verses were recited, and thus continuity was maintained between the Vedic and the later periods of Hindu culture. The Hindu Dharma of the last two thousand years is mainly based on the Puranas.

What are the Puranas. The word Purana occurs in the ancient Vedic literature (Atharva Veda V. 19. 9. Sata Patha Brahmana 11. V. 7. 9 and 13. 4. 3. 13. Taittarya Aranyaka and Chhandogya Upanishad). In the Brahmanas, the Upanishads and the old Buddhist texts, the work Purana mostly occurs in conjunction with the word Itihasa, as Itihasa Purana. When the word Purana is used in these ancient texts, it does not refer to any book or books of this name. "There is no proof", says Winternitz, "That such collections actually existed in the form of books in Vedic times. All that we know is that there were professional story tellers (Aitihasikas, Pauranikas) in very ancient times. It is certain, moreover, that as early as the time of the Buddha there was in existence an inexhaustible store of prose and verse narratives—Akhyanas, Itihasas, Puranas and Gathas—forming as it were literary public property which was drawn upon by the Buddhists and the Jains as well as these epic poets". The recitation of stories and legends was a part of yajna performances. The Ashwamedha yajna, for instance, took about a year during which the horse of victory traversed through various kingdoms accompanied by a strong fighting guard. During this time, the legends of heroes and sages were recited for the benefit of the Yajamana and others. We know from Sata Path

Brahmana that even dancing, dramatic performances and recitation of poetry formed part of important yajnas.

When we come to the Sutra literature we find evidence of the existence of real Puranas. In some of the Dharma Sutras such as the Apastamba Dharma Sutra, the word Purana occurs in the singular number, but in Manu, Yajnavalkya and other Smritis, and also in Ramayana and Mahabharata, the word Purana accurs in the plural. It is therefore possible that in the time of the Sutras at about the fifth or fourth century B. C. there was in existence a single collection of legends about the creation and dissolution of the worlds and about various ancient kings and sages. The compilation of Mahabharata is regarded as having being completed by the fourth century A.D. By that time a small number of such collections might have come into existence. Generally, the word Itihasa refers to such works as Ramayana and Mahabharata, while the Puranas were concerned with cosmological problems and with the legends and geneologies of gods and sages. According to a very old definition of Purana as given in some of the Puranas themselves, every Purana is to have five characteristics (Pancha Lakshana) i.e. it is to deal with five subjects (a) Sarga or creation of the world (b) Pratisarga or dissolution and recreation (c) Vansha or geneologies of gods and sages (c) Manvantarani or the Manu periods of time (e) Vansacarita or the history of solar and lunar dynasties of kings.

Most probably these were the subjects dealt with in

the early Puranas which were perhaps three or four in all. In the Vishnu Purana III, 6, there is a legend that the Suta Romaharshana and three of his pupils wrote the four fundamental Purana Sanhitas. The same legend occurs in the Bhagvad Purana also (XII, 7.). It stands to reason that the number of Puranas in the beginning of Christian era could not have been as many as they are now. "What is specially significant of almost of all our Puranas,—their sectarian character—i.e. their being dedicated to the cult of some god or the other, of Vishnu or Shiva, is completely ignored by the old definition." (Winternitz, Indian literature, page 522). The texts of the earlier Puranas have naturally perished and the texts that have come down to us under the name of the Puranas are definitely of later times. They are written in the interest of Saiva or Vaisnava sects, and "not one of them corresponds exactly, a few correspond slightly and others do not correspond at all with the description of ancient Puranas preserved to us ... ... here and there in the works themselves" (Weber). In Amar's Lexicon, Panch Lakshana is cited as a synonym for Purana. The present day Puranas, as already said, do not correspond with this definition. We sometimes come across lengthy passages similarly worded in several of the Puranas. Most probably these passages represent material taken from earlier Puranas. After the present-day Puranas came to be written to meet the sectarian needs of the times, the older texts perished because they were no longer wanted and so no fresh copies of them were made.

The older Puranas, among the extant ones, may have

been composed before the seventh century A. D. There is no mention in these Puranas of later dynasties of kings or of later rulers of India such as Harsha for example. Not only were these Puranas composed in the early centuries of Christian era, the Buddhist Mahayana texts such as Lalit Vistara, Saddharma Pundarika etc., which bear a great resemblance to these Puranas, were also composed at about the same time. The Jain writers of the Digambara school also composed their own Puranas from about the sixth century onward. It was a period when books of this kind were composed by the then-existing important religious sects.

We come across references to some of these Puranas, for instance, in the works of Bana (625 A. D.), Kumarila (about 750 A. D). Shankara (800 A. D.) referred to Puranas as ancient sacred texts. Alberuni (1030 A. D.) in his book on India gives a list of the eighteen Puranas. We can thus place the date of the composition of the Puranas in the early Christian centuries.

But there was no copy-right in those times and no check on the addition of new matter. The earlier Puranas went on increasing in bulk. Constant changes and revisions took place, and this went on right up to the 12th century and even beyond. There was a further composition of Up-Puranas which are also eighteen in number and equally bulky volumes.

According to Winternitz, the Puranas are sacred books of the second grade. The Pauranic stories and legends were originally composed by Sutas or bards who did not belong to the priestly class and who recited

these legends on the occasion of great yajnas. Later on, "the lower priesthood, which congregated in temples and places of pilgrimage took possession of this poetry, and these rather uneducated temple-priests used it for the glorification of the deities whom they served, and in later times more and more for the recommendation of temples and places of pilgrimage on which they maintained and often enriched themselves." (Winternitz. Indian Literature, Part I. p. 528.)

Winternitz says further, "The careless language and poor verification, in which the grammar often suffers for the sake of the metre, are just as characteristic of these work as are the confused medley of contents and the boundless exaggerations. Just a few examples of the latter. While in the Rigveda, Urvasi sojourns with Pururavas for four years, the two lovers in the Vishnu Purana spend 61,000 years in pleasure and delight. While even the older Puranas knew only seven hells, the Bhagvad Purana speaks of hundreds and thousands of hells and the Garuda Purana counts no less than 84 lakhs. The later the Purana—and this may be regarded as a general rule—the more boundless are the exaggerations. This too indicates that it was an inferior class of literary men belonging to the lower uneducated priesthood, which was engaged in the transmission of the Puranas." (Ibid Page 30). It is unfortunately these books composed by second-rate temple-priests in their own interests, which have continued to form the basic scriptures of Hinduism, right from the early christian centuries to the present times. These books do not as a rule make a very

instructive reading, though they are interspersed, here and there, with a number of good things, some profound legends and dialogues, in form and content recalling the Upanishads. These can be regarded as an oasis in the vast desert of Puranic literature.

Swami Dayanand carried on a relentless battle against the Puranas. He traced the decadence of Hinduism to the teachings of the Puranas. The Pauranik Hinduism differs radically from Vedic Hinduism, if the word Hinduism may be used to cover all periods of Indian culture.

The Pauranik Hinduism may be described as that form of Vedic culture in which the non-Aryan elements had been assimilated. This synthesis took place at first through the agency of the great sacrifices performed in the later Vedic period. On the occasion of these sacrifices even the non-Aryans were allowed to recite their traditional lore. All sorts of people,—the Aryans and the non-Aryans—used to assemble in the sacrificial compound or the Yajna Bhavan, when Ashvamedha and other yajnas were performed. Men and women, the young and the old, the learned and the ignorant, the high and the low, the Aryans and the non-Aryan tribes and even the jugglers attended these sacrifices. For the entertainment of this varied audience a programme of stories, songs, dances and dramatic performances was arranged.

In the later part of the Vedic age, the earlier state of conflict between the Aryans and the Non-Aryans had practically ceased, and give and take between the two

cultures began to take place. The non-Aryans gradually accepted the Aryan faith and culture, and in their turn gave many things to the Aryans, so much so that the Vedic religion was transformed altogether. Along with the Aryan cult there were present, most probably, many Avaidik cults as well with wisdom of their own. They adopted, in course of time, certain Vedic rites, beliefs and institutions, and the Vedic priests, in their turn, also adopted a number of things from them. It is quite possible that some Aryan Brahmans, on account of dissatisfaction with the current sacrificial rites, derived inspiration from the non-Aryan cults and set up new sects of their own. In some of the texts of Buddhism we are told of the existence of more than sixty sects which had arisen within the Vedic religion.

As the result of a large-scale intermixture of different races, a common life lived within the same geographical region, and common historical vicissitudes, a common Indian culture emerged. It is very difficult, at this time, to disentangle the distinctive contributions made by different races to the composite Indian culture, but as regards the actual introduction of different elements into the Vedic culture of the period no doubt can be entertained.

As a result of the synthesis between the Vedic and the non-Vedic elements, there took place, gradually, the substitution of temple worship for the sacrificial cult of the ancient Aryans. Of course, the sacrificial cult has also, during all these centuries, continued to exist among some classes of Brahmans. The introduction of puja

in temples and the acceptance of many new gods in post-Vedic Hinduism are definitely the contribution of non-Aryan culture. The puja of the Pauranik Dharma is quite different from the sacrificial cult of the Vedic religion. At the later stage of the Vedic age, in the time of the Brahmanas, the sacrificial cult had become so mechanical, complicated, lifeless and expensive that the common people and even the learned Brahmans, who were not interested in the pecuniary aspect of sacrifice, lost interest in them, and a search for new modes of worship began to be made. We find it mentioned at places in the Brahmanas and the Aranyakas that there is no absolute necessity for the actual performance of great sacrifices like agni-chain etc., as mental meditation on them brings equally good results. At the end of Aitareya Aranyaka, the sage Kavishiya says, "We don't stand in need of the study of Vedas and the sacrifices." Similar ideas are expressed in Shatpatha Brahmana (10.5. 4-16) and Manduk Upanishad. We thus come across anti-sacrificial tendencies in the Vedic literature itself, which later on become well marked in the Jain and Buddhist movements.

In the Puranas we come across a number of new gods, the prominent ones being Shiva and Vishnu with a host of other subsidiary gods. The description of Shiva in the Puranas is very much different from that of Rudra in the Rigveda. The Pauranik Shiva is the lord of Rakshasas and Asuras, of Bhutas and Pishachas unlike Rudra who is the god of the intermediate region (Antariksha) and has nothing to do with Yakshas,

Rakshasas etc. Shiva is thus clearly a non-Vedic deity who was later identified with the Vedic god Rudra. Most Vedic gods have been relegated to the background in the Puranas. Shiva, Vishnu, Durga, Skanda, Ganesh, Sitala etc. are the chief gods and goddesses of the Puranas. They have either no place in the Vedas or only a secondary place. Many animal deities of which Hanumana is a notable example also appear in Pauranik Hinduism. Many rivers and trees also come in for worship. The form which Hinduism adopted in the Pauranik age under the leadership of the temple-priests to which Winternitz makes such a pointed reference, practically continues up to the present times. Apart from the elements which it borrowed from non-Aryan or exotic sources, many unwholesome practices and conceptions seem to have been introduced by the ingenuity of the priests themselves in order to attract the ignorant pious Hindus to their sects, and at the same time to make themselves rich at the expense of their unsuspecting devotees. It is really strange that these books of not very great literary or religious worth should have continued, during all these centuries, to be the scriptures of Hinduism.

The Pauranik Hinduism, though named after the Puranas is based upon the Dharma Shastras and the Tantras besides the Puranas. The later Puranas, however incorporated all important things from the Smrtis and the Tantras. There are thousands of shlokas in the Puranas dealing with caste, ashrama and other topics of the Dharma Shastras. Similarly the worship of Shakti,

the mother goddess, and many elements of the system of worship inculcated in the Tantras have been adopted by the Puranas. As current Hinduism has many elements taken from Dharma Shastras and the Tantras, we shall make a brief mention of both of them before dealing at length with the various aspects of Pauranik Hinduism.

The Dharma Shastras. The Pauranik Hinduism regards Sruti or Veda as the ultimate authority in matters of Dharma. The Vedic mantras have from ancient times been regarded as divinely inspired and the very breath of the Supreme Being, and so they were regarded as the primary source of religion, morals and social laws. There was a general belief that every truth or law can be traced to the Vedas. The Dharma Shastras and the Puranas therefore look upon the Vedas at the supreme authority in matters of Dharma.

The word Dharma stands for the whole body of religious and social obligations governing the conduct of an individual as a member of his community, as a member of his caste and as a person in a particular stage or ashrama of life. In other words, it stands for the duties pertaining to the different varnas and ashramas, as well as to the general duties of an individual in society in the form of rules about truthfulness, non-covetousness etc. (Samanya Dharma) and rules about Prayascitta or penance for the atonement of sins committed by a person. Dharma Shastras are mainly concerned with the various topics of Dharma as mentioned above.

We do not find, in the Vedas, detailed precepts on

matters of Dharma though there are incidental references in them to the various topics dealt with later in the Dharma Shastras ; such as marriage, partition, inheritance, adoption of sons, stridhan etc. It is thus clear that the social rules laid down in Dharma Shastras had their roots in the old Vedic tradition and therefore there was some justification in regarding the Veda as the ultimate source of Dharma.

Along with the Vedic injunctions, there were also in the Vedic period, various customs and social rules governing the vyavahara or daily conduct of the people and enforced by the wise men of society (The Sistas). These came to be codified later on in the form of Dharma Sutras and Smritis from about 600 B.C. onwards. The Dharma Sutras are in prose or in mixed prose and verse, and most of them are older than most of the Smritis. The Smritis are in verse and are more systematic in the arrangement of their contents.

Though the supreme authority of the Vedas continued to be recognised all along, it did not stand in the way of the development and modification of social thought from about 500 B. C. onwards. In course of time, the Dharma Shastras became the main authority for the determination of Dharma. As social rules and practices cannot always remain the same, but must change in a living society with the change in social conditions, many new Smritis came to be written from time to time in order to meet the needs of changed circumstances. For instance, after the Muslim conquest of Sindh, when a large number of Hindus had been converted to Islam,

the question of their reconversion to Hinduism took a critical form. Devala Smriti was written in order to make it possible for these converts to be taken back into Hinduism. Similarly other Smritis came to be written in different parts of the country in defence of their peculiar social customs. The writing of Smritis, commentaries and digests, went on down to the 18th century.

We thus find that Hindu social and individual law (Dharma) has continued to be modified by the writing of new Smritis and digests from age to age. Hindu society however became more and more conservative from 1400 A. D. onwards during the Muslim and British rule, after it had lost the power to legislate in social matters. For the last 600 years or so, Hindu society has been mostly in a static and decayed condition "like an antiquated structure, not repaired or white-washed for more than 500 years." It is only in recent times, after the attainment of independence, that whole-some social changes have begun to be introduced by means of legislation.

The Tantras. What is commonly known as Hinduism is a synthesis of the basic points of view of the Aryans and the non-Aryans. The most important sects in Hinduism are Saivism, Vaisnavism. Saktism and Smartism. The last follows the pure Vedic tradition with its belief in Brahman, sacrifice and the rules of varnas and ashramas. Almost all the followers of Smartism are Brahamans and they draw their religious inspiration from the Vedas, the Upanishads and the Dharma Shastras.

Smartism has a scanty following: the majority of Hindus belong to the remaining three sects referred to above. The worship of Sakti or mother-goddess is common to all the three sects. She represents the material creative energy of the Supreme Spirit and is worshipped as such. Shiva and Vishnu are identified by their respective followers with Brahman and the Sakti is represented in the feminine aspect, as the consort or wife of either deity. Some Hindus however give greater prominence to the worship of Sakti than to that of the Supreme Spirit. The world after all is due to the creative energy of God. We are directly in touch with Sakti and through Sakti only can we realise the Brahman. Such Hindus are known as Saktas and their sect is called Saktism.

There is another difference also. As Brahman is sat-cit-anand (Existence, Knowledge and Bliss), it should be possible according to the Saktas, to realise it through bliss or joy as through knowledge i. e. through the enjoyment of sensual pleasures. The Saktas were powerfully influenced by this idea and they tried to develop a technique of realisation in which enjoyment of sense-pleasure was made the basis of spiritual discipline. They got the idea that sensual pleasures should be sublimated not by suppressing them but by giving them expression in a prescribed manner. As this way is risky and liable to abuse, it is rightly condemned by the followers of other sects. They accept the worship of Sakti in the form of Durga, Kali, Bhawani etc. but they do not accept the Sakta technique of spiritual realisation.

Saktism began to flourish in India some time after the fifth century A. D. It is mostly prevalent in Bengal and Assam.

Though the expression Tantra is frequently used as a general term for the sacred books of the Vaisnavas, the Saivas and the Sakatas, strictly speaking, however, when we speak of the Tantras, we primarily refer to the scriptures of the Sakatas. The worship of Devi or mother-goddess in Hinduism, under various names is due to the influence of Saktism.

In Saktism, we come across great religious ideas, faultless morality and asceticism, and at the same time, belief in spells, charms and incantations ; crude superstitions, animal sacrifices and the inclusion of five essentials (Pancatattva) in the worship of the goddess. These essentials take the form of intoxicating drink (madya), meat (mansa), fish (mạtsya), parched grain (mudra) and sexual union (maithuna). Whatever be the origin of this strange mode of worship, it naturally led to gross, immoral practices. It is worthy of note that in Bengal, the original home of Saktism, it was prevalent specially among the aristocratic families and even at the present age its adherents are to be found not in the lower classes but among the educated.

The mode of puja which we find in Pauranik Hinduism is, to a large extent, the contribution of Saktism. It is generally believed that a common man feels the necessity of a ceremonial through which he may be able to express his inner feeling of devotion. We find these rites and ceremonies in almost all religions of

the world. The Sakta religion is to be credited with bringing into prominence, the common method of Hindu worship with its use of incense (dhupa), water (achman), light (dipa), bell (ghanti), flowers (pushpa), as well as many other attractive ceremonies meant to create a vivid impression on the mind of the worshipper and to excite in him the sense of religious mysticism.

Saktism also inculcates the use of various mantras or syllables of mysterious significance, as well as yantras or mystical diagrams drawn on paper, metal or any other material, mudras or special positions of fingers and movements of hands, and nyasas or placing the finger tips on various parts of the body while reciting certain mantras. It is supposed that all these devices would induce the goddess to impart her special grace to the devotee and fill him with her life and power. The final goal in Saktism like all other Indian sects, is the attainment of moksha or salvation. The Tantras are concerned mainly with spiritual discipline in its various forms ranging from the highest yoga and meditation, through ordinary puja ritual, to certain very gross practices which, in the nature of the case, if practised by all types of people, are liable to excite the passions rather than to do any spiritual good to the persons concerned. Of course it is definitely laid down that the five essentials or Pancatattvas are to be practised only in the circle (cakra) of the initiated and "After they have been purified by sacred formulas and ceremonies." Swami Dayanand subjected these practices of the Saktas to a very severe criticism. The cult as described above, did in certain

circles lead to all sorts of wild orgies and to the indiscriminate mixing of men and women in their private religious meetings. It seems that Saktism adopted many of its characteristics including the worship of mother goddess from non-Aryan sources as well as from the Brahmanic sacrificial religion. It adopted, for instance, the practice of animal sacrifice from Brahmanical Hinduism.

There is no mention of Tantras even in the latest portions of Mahabharata nor do the Chinese pilgrims make any mention of them. Though the worship of female deity may be older, the Tantras themselves could not have existed before the 5th or 6th century A. D.

After these short references to Dharma Shastras and Tantras, we now turn to the description of various elements of Pauranik Hinduism.

Religious Worship and Mythology in the Puranas. The religion of the Puranas consists in the worship of various gods and goddesses by means of idols or images. The Vedic seers saw one spiritual principle underlying the various manifestations of nature. They had a vision of one great Purusha in all natural phenomena. "They call him Indra, Mitra, Varuna and Agni; to what is one sages give many a name" (Rigveda I. 115, 1). In contrast to this faith of the ancient Aryans, we find in the Puranas the worship of many gods. Polytheism takes the place of Vedic monotheism. The chief gods in Puranas are Vishnu, Siva and Brahma. There are to be found many other gods and goddesses also but they are associated with these principal gods in the form of their

consorts, sons and attendants. Many gods were accepted from time to time, from non-Aryan tribes. They were given the ranks of subordinate deities and brought in relation to the principal gods. In this way, a most picturesque form of popular religion became prevalent among the Hindus. We must not forget that in a number of places in the Puranas, Siva and Vishnu are regarded as names of one infinite Supreme God. "But very soon a number of gods and goddesses came to be associated with Siva and Vishnu thus converting the theistic creeds of these sects into virtually polythetitic religions."

All sorts of legends, stories and myths are related about these gods. In fact these myths and legends form the major part of the Puranas. Most of these myths and legends do not make a very instructive reading. Take for instance, the story of creation as given in the Bhagavad Purana. "A lotus came out of the navel of Vishnu, and Brahma out of the lotus, Swayambhu out of big toe of Brahma's right foot and the queen Styarupta out of its left great toe. Out of his forehead were born ten sons such as Rudra and Maruchi who begot ten Prajapatis whose thirteen daughters were married to Kashyapa. Out of these thirteen wives of Kashyapa, Diti gave birth to fiends, Danu to demons, Aditi to the sun, Vinata to birds, Kadru to snakes, Sarma to dogs and jackals and others to elephants, horses, donkeys, buffaloes, grass, straw and trees such as acacia with thorns and all,"—a very fantastic account of the creation of the world and of its various objects.

Here is another story from the Bhagvad Purana, about the death of the demon Hiranyaksha. He folded the earth like a mattress and made a pillow of it which he placed under his head and then went to sleep. Vishnu incarnated himself as a boar, caught hold of the earth from under his head. This woke him and a duel followed between the two. The boar killed Hiranyaksha. One may very well ask, if the demon rolled the earth into a pillow and placed it under his head, where did he himself sleep and where did the duel between him and the boar take place ?

There is the story of a robber Ajamal, who called his son Narayan, when he was on his death bed and was about to expire. At once the god Narayan came to him and Ajamal was given a place in the heaven by thus taking god's name without meaning it of course. This story is meant to illustrate the great efficacy of taking god's name or nama-mahatmya, but at the same time, by implication, it makes the living of a good life altogether unnecessary.

We find the gods Siva and Vishnu practising all sorts of deceits against the demons. At the time of the churning of the ocean, after nectar had been obtained, Vishnu changed himself into a very beautiful woman, Mohini, in order to attract the demons to herself so that the gods could drink off the nectar while the demons stood in a state of stupefaction under the charms of Mohini.

Some of these stories are meant to impart lessons in conjugal faithfulness, truth and purity of life. They are

of course beautiful, imaginative rendering of great moral ideas. But the difficulty with popular Hinduism is that the people, instead of regarding these myths as merely imaginative and fanciful, regard them as descriptions of actual events. Take for instance the following story from Markandeya Purana, of a devoted wife Anusuya who dedicates herself to the service of her leprous and libertine husband. He, one day, expresses the desire to visit a prostitute. As he cannot walk, his wife carries him on her shoulders. In the way, as it was dark, the foot of the husband strikes a pole on which an innocent Brahman was being crucified. It caused him a great pain and so he laid a curse on the husband that he would die on the rising of the sun the next day. Anusuya proclaimed then and there that she would not let the sun rise unless the curse were withdrawn. The night was prolonged indefinitely. There was a great stir and anxiety among the gods as they could not get their offerings till the sun rose once again. At last the difficulty was got over through a wise expedient adopted for the purpose.

The description of the cosmos as given in the Puranas, is equally fantastic and imaginary. The world is described as consisting of seven concentric continents separated from one another by encircling seas of different substances such as butter, milk, honey, etc. The innermost continent is separated from the next by salt water. It is called Jambu Dvipa and its most important part is Bharat Varsha or India. It contains seven chains of mountains in which there is no mention of any range

below the Vindhas. This is the kind of Geography which our young people learnt from the Puranas before the advent of the British who of course introduced right geographical conceptions about the world in schools and colleges.

In Pauranik Hinduism, puja or temple worship takes the place of Vedic sacrifices. Various idols of gods and goddesses are installed in the temples. The worshippers stand before the idols with folded hands as long as the worship lasts, make some offerings at the end, and then depart after doing parikraman round the temple. In great places of pilgrimage there are hundreds of temples with all kinds of idols placed in them. The general belief is that the god resides in the idol, after his spirit is called into it by a special ceremony. The image then becomes the visible representation of the deity itself. The divinity supposed to be present in the image is regaled with incense, offerings of flowers, fruits and with dance and music. In the case of divinities like Durga and Kali, animals may be sacrificed and the blood of the victim is either placed in a cup before the image or is smeared on it. If the image is made only for a temporary purpose, the spirit called into it is released by the performance of another rite. After that, the image is not believed to possess any spiritual potency and is changed into a mere clay or stone. Idol worship is the chief method of worship among the orthodox Hindus.

There is no evidence of idol worship in ancient Vedic literature. We can say more or less positively that the religious practices of the ancient Aryans did not include

the worship of idols. As Phallic emblems and other icons have been discovered in Mohenjodaro ruins, it it reasonable to think that worship of idols was prevalent among people who respresented that civilisation, and they were most probably the non-Aryan Dravidians. The practice of image worship was adopted, it seems, at first by the lower masses and then in course of time it gradually became a common mode of religious worship among Hindus. We find references to it in some of the Dharma Sutras, in Manu and later Smritis. It can therefore be said that temples and the worship of images had already come into existence by the 4th or 5th century B. C. (Manu 2. 176). By that time Deva puja had taken the place of Deva yajna which was the religious practice among the ancient Aryans. For some time Deva yajna and Deva puja went on side by side till ultimately the latter practically supplanted the former.

Swami Dayanand regarded idol worship as one of the most important causes of disunity among the Hindus. Idol worship is generally found in polytheistic religions. Among orthodox Hindus, we find people socially disunited and even antagonistic to one another on account of their having different gods as objects of worship. The worshippers of Siva remained, for centuries, in bitter opposition to the worshippers of Vishnu, and even among Vaishnavas we find, sometimes, the devotees of Rama not taking very kindly to the devotees of Krishna, though both are supposed to be the incarnations of Vishnu. Belief in one God generally leads to the sense of brotherhood amongst the followers of a mono–

theistic religion. It leads to social unity and cohesion which are found to be lacking when people living in the same region owe their allegiance to different gods. This is one of the factors which according to Swami Dayanand kept the Hindus divided amongst themselves in the past. Apart from the baleful social consequences of idol worship, its religious effects are not very elevating. It keeps the person at a low level of religious attainment. This fact is admitted in many orthodox texts where it is positively stated that image worship is only meant for people at primitive cultural level. It is quite possible that later on, on account of its pecuniary advantages, the temple priests who had a great hand in the composition of Puranas, made the worship of idols popular amongst all classes of people, the educated and the uneducated alike.

At one time, the Brahmans who acted as priests in temples, were looked upon as of inferior status. In the section on Shraddha in Manu Smriti, we are told that the Brahman priests of temples should not be invited to the Shraddha ceremony and the Shraddha feast, because of their lower status. They were not considered fit to be classed as the equal of learned and pious Brahmans.

Prayascitta. In Pauranik Hinduism we come across a very complicated ceremonialism or Karmakanda which in course of time replaced the sacrificial Karmakanda of the Vedic religion. We find among the Hindus a rich and variegated ritualism in the form of the ceremonies of Prayascitta or purification from sin and defilement, various kinds of Vratas, fasts and Utsavas, pilgrimages to

sacred places, Shraddha ceremony for one's dead ancestors, belief in astrology, Nakshatras, Tithis and Lagans and a number of other things.

The conception of Sin is found even in the Rigveda. In the prayers to Varuna we come across an intense desire on the part of the devotee to be freed from sin and its consequences (Rigveda, VII. 86, II. 27, 14, VIII. 45, 34.) It would therefore be wrong to say that the idea of sin was not known to the Vedic sages. From very old times certain sins such as theft, violating the bed of one's Guru, murder of a Brahman, telling a lie or killing of a foetus in the womb were regarded as mortal sins. In the Sutras some Utpataks or minor sins are also mentioned. Various methods are suggested for the removal of sins. Some of them are repentance and tapas such as celibacy, bathing three times a day, wearing wet clothes till they are dried on the body, sleeping on the ground, going on a pilgrimage, fasting and giving of charity etc. Japa or recitation of Vedic texts and performance of a certain number of Pranayamas each day were also prescribed as means for the expiation of sins.

Repentance or Prayascitta was regarded as a very potent means of expiation or freeing the mind of the sinner from the effects of sin and making it normal once again. For very grave sins terrible prayascittas were prescribed such as throwing oneself into fire, drinking boiling water, cow's urine, milk or ghee. It seems that the Hindus in the post-Vedic age were very much obsessed with the idea of prayascitta. There is a vast literature on the subject of prayascitta. Gautam Dharma Sutra devotes

ten of its twenty-eight chapters to the subject of prayascitta. The penance for the Brahman was to be the highest, for the Kshatriya, Vaisya and Sudra, it was to be three-fourth, one-half and one-fourth respectively of what it was for a Brahman.

The consequence of not undergoing a penance or prayascitta was said to be abiding life in hell. Very gruesome accounts are given in some of the Puranas of the torments which sinful persons who die without having undergone the requisite penance, are made to suffer. The number of hells mentioned in Garuda Purana is as many as eighty four lacs. It seems that after the advent of the British when various crimes were made punishable in courts of law, the idea of prayascitta gradually declined and lost its hold on the minds of the people.

The Idea of Impurity. There is a common idea in Hinduism that birth or death in a family causes impurity to all the members of that family. The period of impurity lasts ten days or more and depends upon whether the deceased was an infant or a grown-up person, as well as upon costs and some other factors. A woman in her monthly course is also held to be impure, and impurity is imparted to anyone who touches her. Similarly contact with an untouchable also defiles a person. In the case of birth or death it is not only the members of the family who become impure, the things of the household also are defiled and have to be purified by certain ceremonies including the sprinkling

of water on them. One can see no reason why birth and death should be associated with the idea of impurity. The whole thing appears meaningless. There is a difference between impurity caused by birth and that caused by death. The period of impurity is also decreased if the person died in a country separated from the mourner by a river or a mountain or is at a distance of thirty yajnas, whatever it may mean. The greatest drawback however in Hinduism in the past has been to treat certain persons as impure, and contact with them as a source of pollution. Even now amongst many orthodox Hindus there is no interdining amongst the members of the different castes. The belief that interdining amongst different castes or that tactual contact with the lowest classes brings on pollution, has acted as a great check against the castes getting together, and kept them more or less in a state of segregation.

Bodily purity is a good thing but the concept of purity in Hinduism has been carried to an extravagant length and has very much stood in the way of communal solidarity.

Shraddha Ceremony. The ceremony of Shraddha consists in feeding the Brahmans according to a prescribed procedure for the benefit of one's dead ancestors, generally the parents and the grand parents The underlying idea is that the food offered to the Brahmans is somehow transformed into the right kind of substance for the use of one's ancestors. How is it possible to believe that if one's dead ancestor has become a beast, the food offered to a Brahman at the time of Shraddha

would be changed into grass or meat as the case may be. Swami Dayanand regarded this belief as a pure superstition and interpreted the word pitra occuring in the Rigveda as living parents of the Yajamana in a sacrifice. For instance it is expressly stated in the Satapatha Brahmana that food is to be offered to the father of the sacrificer with the words "This is for thee."

We have, in many primitive societies, what is called the cult of the dead. It was believed in those early times that unless the ancestors were propitiated with food and other things, they might do harm to the living. The belief that food given to a Brahman somehow reaches the dead person is one of the many superstitions prevalent in Hinduism and is akin to the abovementioned belief of primitive people.

It is said in Baudhayan Dharma Sutra (11. 8. 1) that the rite of Shraddha confers long life, heaven, fame and prosperity. The Vishnu Purana states that the proper performance of Shraddha leads to the propitation of Indra, Rudra and the other gods, as well as of sages, birds, men, beasts, creeping animals and hosts of pitars. "In the Kurma Purana it is stated that on the day of Amavasya, the pitra assuming an aerial form come to the door of their former haunt and mark whether Shraddha is being performed by men of their family. This they do till sun set. When the sun sets, being oppressed by hunger and thirst, they become full of despair and feel sorrow, breathe heavily for a long time and go away condemning their descendents. The pitars of him who does not offer Shraddha on Amavasya, even with water

and vegetables, go away after cursing him." (Kane, History of Dharma Shastras, Vol. IV, Page 351). Needless to say all this is pure fancy. One may ask how the author of Kurma Purana got all this information about the pitras.

It is said in Agni Purana that if Shraddha is performed in a holy place or a tirtha-sthana, and on certain auspicious days, inexhaustible merit accrues therefrom. If by virtue of the merits of Shraddha performed by a descendent, the spirits of the dead can go to heaven and if their sins are forgiven, it implies the violation of the law of Karma. There is palpable inconsistency between the theory of Shraddha and the law of Karma which is a universally accepted belief in Hinduism. If our next life is to be determined by the effects of our own Karma, no amount of food offered to the Brahmans in the name of the dead ancestors would help them in any way.

Pilgrimage to holy places. Most religions have their holy places. For a Muslim it is incumbent to visit Mecca at least once in his lifetime. There is belief in holy places in Buddhism and Christianity as well. In India, holy places have played a very important part in the religious life of the people. Most of these places of pilgrimage are situated in picturesque and beautiful surroundings and a visit to them therefore is a source of aesthetic delight. The traditions of holy places, most probably, have a spiritual influence on the visiting pilgrims. There is nothing to object to staying for some time at places having holy associations. But the objection lies in the

superstitious belief found in the Puranas about the miraculous effects of pilgrimage to holy places. If, for instance, one bathes in the Ganges at Haridwar or at the confluence of Ganges and Jamuna at Allahabad on a certain auspicious day, all sins are absolved. Similarly visits to Uttar Kashi, Kedarnath, Pushkar, Jagannath, Banaras, Amarnath Cave, Kurukshetra and a number of other similar places are supposed to bring about wonderful effects. At all these holy places there are found hundreds of Brahman Pandas and priests who make a regular income out of the credulity of the pilgrims and fleece them in all sorts of ways. There is no doubt that most stories of the miraculous effects of tirtha yatra found in the Puranas are meant to induce the pious Hindus to visit the tirthas in a large number. In Gaya and many other places the Brahmans benefiting from the charities and offerings of the pilgrims have made a sort of a guild or corporation for themselves and do not like that any outsider should intrude into their domain.

In the Puranas we come across all sorts of incredible stories about the greatness of the tirthas. It is stated in the Padma Purana that it is useless to perform sacrifices or severe austerities when we can easily attain heaven and Moksha by honouring Ganges. The Matsya, Kurma and some other Puranas express the view that "At the very sight of Prayaga, even by taking its name or by applying its clay to one's body a man becomes free from sins." It is the Tirtharaja and those who bathe here go to heaven and those who die here are not born again. Even religious suicides are allowed at Prayaga

and some other places, by throwing oneself into fire, by drowning oneself, by fasting or by jumping from the branches of a tree and so on. In that way one could get rid of the effects of mortal sins or mahapataks. "Not only did common man believe in the promise of the Puranas that those who killed themselves at Prayaga (at the Sangam or near Vat tree) secured Moksha which was the highest of the four Purusharthas or goals of human existence, but even poets like Kalidasa held the view that though Moksha or Kaivalya or apavarga requires correct knowledge and realisation of the Supreme Spirit, according to the Vedanta, Sankhya and Nyaya systems, death at the sacred Sangam led to Moksha even without tattva-jnana". (Ibid, Page 605). There are historical examples of kings such as Yasah Karnadeva, Calukya Somesvara committing suicide at Prayaga or the Tungbhadra. It is said that the king Kumara Gupta of Magadha entered the fire of dry cow-dung cakes. This was in accordance with the prescription of the Matsya Purana (107, 9-10) which states that "The man who suffering from no diseases, having no deficiency as to his limbs and being in full possession of his five senses encompasses his death in cowdung fire remains honoured in heaven for as many years as there are pores in the whole of his body." There is a verse in the Kurma Purana according to which Moksha may be secured or not after a thousand births elsewhere, but in Banaras, Moksha can be secured in a single birth. We come across such childish statements in many Puranas. One would feel amused at them but for the fact that a large number of pious and credulous persons believed in them

and killed themselves at these sacred places in order to obtain an easy access to heaven or Moksha. Similar tales are to be met with in regard to many other tirthas and sacred rivers such as Jagannath, Gaya, Godavari, Narvada and so on.

Vratas and Fasts. There are similar statements in connection with various vratas enjoined in the Puranas, and highly fantastic rewards are promised to persons who fast on particular days and offer charity to Brahmans.

"There is an immense literature on Vratas" says Kane, "There is no topic of Dharma Shastras except that probably that of Tirthayatra and of Shraddha in which the Puranas were so eloquent as on Vrata. Some of the Puranas contain thousands of verses on Vrata ... ... on a modest calculation Puranas contain about twenty five thousand verses at least on Vratas" (Vol. V, Part I, P. 57). Originally the word Vrata meant an ordinance, a vow or a fixed resolve to perform a certain act. This is the most usual meaning of the word in Vedic literature. We read in the Rigveda of the Vrata of the gods, which means the law or ordinance on which they invariably act. In the case of man the word would mean the vow or the resolve to undertake a certain performance or a religious rite and to persist till it is completed.

In Mahabharata and Puranas, the word Vrata came to be used for a religious undertaking to be undergone for any special purpose, Even a Prayascitta was a

Vrata as it was undertaken for the purpose of getting rid of sin. In the carrying out of a Vrata, certain restrictions in regard to food and one's general pattern of conduct had to be observed. The principal meaning of Vrata "from at least the first centuries of the Christian era onwards has been that of a religious undertaking or vow, observed on a certain Tithi, week, month or other period securing some desired object by the worship of a deity, usually accompanied by restrictions as to food and behaviour ... ... Vratas may be expiatory (i.e. they will be Prayascittas) or obligatory such as the Vratas of Brahmacharies, Snatakas or householders or they may be voluntary and self-imposed for securing some special end" (Ibid, Vol. V., Part I, P. 28). Several items are included in a Vrata such as morning bath and prayer, sankalpa or resolve, worship, fasting, feeding of Brahmans, maidens or married women or the poor disabled people, and observance of certain rules during the period of the Vrata. As fasting, total or partial, was an invariable part of a Vrata, in ordinary usage it came to mean fasting on particular Tithis. On the days of the Vrata, certain virtues such as celibacy, truthfulness and giving up of flesh diet are specially insisted upon.

The Vratas are highly extolled in the Puranas. All sorts of rewards are promised to persons who undertake these Vratas. In most of the Puranas it is stated that a person can easily and without having to spend much wealth, attain to heaven and the reward of all the sacrifices by simply observing certain fasts. The gods

are pleased with a person who observes fasts and special restrictions on conduct on special tithis, and bestows upon him the highest goal of life. The objects which are sought for and obtained by means of Vratas are, according to the Agni Purana, "Dharma, progeny, wealth, beauty, good fortune, fame, learning, long life, purity, enjoyment of pleasures, heaven and Moksha". Thus the attainment of heaven and other objectives of life become mere child's play, the easiest thing to be accomplished, and within the reach of all people, by simply fasting on particular days.

The list of Vratas is very large, running into some hundreds. A Vrata may last for a day, a week, a fort-night or a month. It may be for one year or for more years than one or for a person's lifetime. Some of the Vratas are connected with special auspicious tithis such as Ekadashi, Sankranti, Anant-chaturdashi, Rakshabandhan, Nagapanchami, Purnima, Caturmasya and so on. Some Vratas are connected with special festivals such as Durgotsava, Janamastami, Vijayadasmi, Dipavali, Sivaratri, Ramanavmi etc. All these Vratas are supposed to bestow great merit on those who observe them. The following story in connection with the marvellous effects of keeping the Ekadashi fast, will illustrate the point.

There was an Apsara in heaven, who was hurled down to the earth on account of doing a wrongful act. She was told that she could re-enter heaven if someone forewent the reward of a fast on Ekadashi. She came down on her Vimana to a town on the earth and begged the king of the place to help her. The king had a

search made for a person who had observed the Ekadashi fast, but none could be found. On that day however a Sudra women quarrelled with her husband and did not take food for the whole day in anger. She was brought before the king and was asked to touch the airship of the Apsara and instantly the Vimana flew upwards towards heaven. When such is the effect of fasting unknowingly on the Ekadashi day, that of keeping fast with full knowledge of the fact would be boundless and beyond the imagination of any person. Such are the stories which you find throughout the Puranas, praising the miraculous effects of Vratas.

Astrology and other beliefs. In the Puranas, belief in Astrology plays an important role. At every important event in the life of a Hindu—when for instance a child is born or a marriage takes place,—it is essential to consult an astrologer. The stars of the bride and the bridegroom must tally in order to ensure a happy married life. If a person is to start on a journey or if a house is to be built, the previous sanction of the astrologer must be taken. In no other people is belief in Astrology as rampant as among the Hindus. It is tacitly accepted that the destiny of men is governed by the stars. On the birth of a child, in an orthodox Hindu family, a horoscope is invariably prepared. The constellation of stars at the birth of a person is supposed to deremine all the important events in his life.

Astronomy is a branch of Mathematics. We can predict the occurance of eclipses and many other natural phenomena by astronomical calculations. But when

one tries to connect the birth or death of a person or his success or failure in a particular undertaking with the conjunction of stars in the heavens, he steps out of the domain of science and enters into the region of superstition. It seldom occurs to the superstition-ridden people that in spite of the astrological consultation so many Hindu marriages turn out to be failures. Success and failure in life are evenly distributed among all people. No one can say that since the Hindus consult an astrologer at every step, they are therefore more happy than people who never seek such guidance.

We find belief in Astrology going far back to the age of the Brahmanas, Upanishads and the Sutras. The Brahmanas and the Kalpa Sutras prescribe auspicious Nakshatras for the performance of important sacrifices. Similarly, the Grihya and Dharma Sutras recommend auspicious times for the performance of domestic rites. But it also appears, from certain references in the Brahmanas and the Manu Smriti, that star-gazing was not regarded as a very respectable profession. It is stated in Manu Smriti (III, 162) that Brahmans who maintain themselves by the practice of Astrology should not be invited to the religious rites held at the time of Shraddha. Kautilya says in Artha-Shastra that "the desired object always eludes the silly man who excessively depends on knowing what the stars portend ; the desired object itself is that governs success in life. What can the stars do ?" But the belief in the stars went on increasing till when we come to the time of the Ramayana and the Mahabharata, the Nakshatras become all important in deciding the destiny

of mankind. We find such references at numerous places in both these epics.

In the ancient Vedic age, the word Muhurta meant 'a short time' but it gradually came to be used in the sense of "time that is fit for the performance of an auspicious act." The fixing of a Muhurta thereafter became necessary for every important event in life. Belief in Astrology however is not peculiar to India. It was a common belief, in the middle ages, in many countries of Europe. While in Europe people, as a rule, have given up the belief, in India it persists with practically the same intensity of conviction even in modern times.

Swami Dayanand strongly criticised belief in Astrology, like other superstitious beliefs. "The sun and the stars," he says "are but inanimate things like this earth of ours. They can do nothing but give light, heat, etc. Do you take them for conscious beings who can bestow happiness or misery on human beings ? If some people are born poor and others rich, it is not because of the influence of stars but because of the result of their deeds, good or bad." There may be some truth in the statement that this belief and other similar beliefs have made the Hindus timid and unenterprising. In stead of looking to one's own effect and initiative for success in life, as people in western countries do, an average orthodox Hindu surrenders his judgment and common sense to the whims of the astrologer. It is said that Rana Sanga of Chittor met his defeat at the hands of Babar because he did not give a timely battle to the

enemy, under the advice of his astrologer. There are a number of instances in Indian History when belief in Astrology cost the freedom of a kingdom. How strange does it seem that on critical occasions the kings, instead of consulting statesmen and wise councellors, should have depended on the advice of ignorant quacks.

We find, in the Puranas and allied literature, various other superstitions of this nature. We shall refer here to one or two of them, for instance, the importance which is given by some people to the marks made on the forehead and to beasmirching the body with ashes. In one of these works, we are told that "branding the body with hot iron, making the mark of trident on the forehead, wearing a rosary, bearing a name ending in Das and receiving the knowledge of the mystic word are the five holy acts that lead to salvation." In the Garuda Purana we are told that the tree which grew out of the tears that ran from the eyes of Rudra was named Rudraksha. Even the wearing of one Rudraksha grain absolves one from all sins and leads him to heaven. Swami Dayanand repeats a story from Bhakatmala which runs as follow :—A man was sleeping under the shade of a tree. He died in his sleep. A crow sitting above on the tree passed its excrement which fell on the dead man's forehead and formed itself into a tilak. The messengers of Yama came to fetch the body. Vishnu's messengers also got there at the same time. And there arose a quarrel between the two over the body. The messengers of Vishnu pointed to the mark on the forehead of the dead man, which was sacred to Vishnu. Thereupon

the servants of Yama went away and the dead man was taken to Vaikuntha, the heaven of Vishnu.

We come across, in the Puranas, exaggerated and fanciful figures on the length of the Yugas, which provide the basis for calculating the age of the earth. According to the Puranas Kaliyuga has the length of 432000 years, the remaining three Yugas being double, three-fold and four-fold in length respectively. The total length of a Chaturyuga thus comes to 4320000 years. 1000 Chaturyugas are equal to a day of Brahma, and form one Kalpa. In each Kalpa there are comprised the periods of 14 Manus, each of whom presides over nearly 71 Caturyugas. If we are to go by the Puranas, mankind have been inhabiting the earth for the last 4320000000 years. It goes against all modern scientific conceptions. The whole chronology of India has been spoiled by these fantastic calculations. In Mahabharat, however, the age of Kaliyuga is given as one thousand years and of the remaining yugas as two thousand, three thousands and four thousands respectively. Including the Sandhya Kala or the time of conjunction between each pair of yugas, the total comes to 12 thousand years. The Mahabharata calculation of yugas thus differs enormously from the Puranic calculation.

The same gross exaggeration is found in speculations about the length of life ascribed to various persons. In the Vedas human life is estimated on the average at one hundred years. In the Puranas, Dasrath is described as having ruled for 60 thousand years and Vishva Mitra as having done penance or tapasya for 10 thousand years

and so on. Such are the exaggerations and fanciful accounts met with in the Puranas.

SOCIAL CONDITIONS

There are thousands of slokas in Puranas, as for instance the Agni Purana, on matters connected with social customs. Most of the Puranas, in their extant form, are later than the important Smritis. They have adopted, for the most part, the injunctions of the Dharma Sutras and Smritis in regard to castes, ashramas, rules of marriage, the position of women and the different topics of positive law. In some cases groups of verses and sometimes even chapters are found to have been borrowed from old Smritis such as the Yajnavalkya Smriti. As many of the early customs like Niyoga, intercaste marriage and widow remarriage had become obsolete at the time of the Puranas, we are told that they were inapplicable in the Kaliyuga, though they had been allowed by the Smritis. Under the cover of the theory of yugas, many old wholesome practices were dropped to make room for later social customs.

It is not necessary to describe at length the nature of caste system and the position of women in Hinduism. There was no caste system among the early Vedic Aryans. We do not find any mention of hereditary caste in the Rigveda. It began to assume the present form in the Sutra period. By the end of the Gupta period in the 6th century B. C., caste system with its numerous sub-divisions had assumed more or less the rigid character as we have it at the present time. Many new sub-castes appeared in course of time. With minor variations

caste has remained, more or less, a fixed and stable institution through all the succeeding centuries. In this system, there was a ban on intermarriage between the castes and, later, on inter-dining as well. The Brahmans formed the apex of the caste pyramid and the Sudras the base. In this rather aristrocratic organisation the Sudras did not, until recently, have any chance to rise in the social scale. They were condemned to always occupy the lowest rank and to follow their particular occupations only. A Sudra was denied the right to read or to listen to the Vedic scriptures. His main function was to serve the higher classes and he could not, during his life time, aspire to a higher social status.

Besides the Sudras there were the Untouchables. They did the meanest work, and their touch—in some cases their mere approach—were regarded as the source of pollution to the higher classes. They lived on the outskirts of a village or a town and led most inhuman existence. The institutions of caste system and untouchability have continued right up to the present time.

The condition of women throughout the Christian centuries down to almost the present time has remained deplorable. In the Vedic period, they held a high status in society. The girls were married at a grown up age, and they could select their own husbands. Education was open to girls as to boys. We come across the names of many ladies who made valuable contribution to the learning of that period.

From about 400 B. C. in the Sutra period, the position of women began to worsen. By the beginning

of the Christian era, pre-puberty marriages became common in Hindu society, specially among the higher classes. The institution of early marriage made it difficult for girls to be properly educated. In course of time it became a disqualification for a woman to profess to be educated.

With the coming into vogue of child marriage, the number of child widows also increased. For some time the widows were allowed to remarry, but after 200 A. D. we find authors of Smritis deprecating the custom of widow remarriage. From about 1000 A. D. even the remarriage of child widows was disallowed by the law-givers. This happened chiefly among the higher castes.

The total ban on widow remarriage led to some very serious consequences. The custom of Sati became general. Many young widows preferred to burn themselves on the pyre of their dead husbands rather than to face the ordeal of a lifelong widowhood. In the Muslim period, a large number of widows embraced the Muslim faith for no other reason than that they could be remarried after conversion.

This remained the condition of women throughout the medieval period right up to present times. Child marriage even at the age of 4 or 5 years or even earlier, the consequent increase in the number of child widows, denial of education to girls and an all-round deplorable condition were the general features of the life of women in India on the eve of the 20th century.

The Ashramas. A few words may be said here on the institution of ashramas in Hinduism. We do not find

any mention of the four ashramas in the Rigvedic period. There were of course the Brahmacharya and the Grihastha periods of life. Both of them appear in a most advanced form. There is a whole hymn in Atharva Veda (XII. 5) dedicated to the praise of the life of a student or Brahmachari. "I want O Agni, to advance towards light and truth out of a life of ignorance and untruth. This is my vow from today (When I am entering the Brahmacharya stage). I shall fulfil this vow and keep moving on the path of progress. Grant me the power to stick to this vow." The other verses of this hymn breathe the same lofty aspiration. In one of them the teacher instructs the pupil as follows :—"Be always full of zeal and energy. Don't sleep in the day time. Give up unrighteous deeds and follow the advice of the teacher. Devote yourself without any remission, to the acquisition of knowledge and fulfil at the same time all rules of discipline in every-day behaviour." We come across, in the Vedic times, with similar advanced ideas of Grihastha ashrama or the married life, the relation of the sexes and the duties of married couples.

When we come to the time of the Sutras and the Smritis, we find a clear-cut division of life into four ashramas, with the addition of the Vanaprastha and the Sanyasa ashramas. According to Manu (VI. 2) when a householder sees his skin wrinkled and his hair growing white, and sees the sons of his son, he may take himself to the forest." After living for some years as a forest hermit, he could, if he so desired, become a Sanyasi or a Parivrajaka. When Buddha

began his teaching in the 5th century B. C., there were many Parivrajakas or wandering mendicants who moved from place to place and lived on alms. Some of the duties laid down for the Vanaprasthas are practically the same as those prescribed for the Sanyasis. "Both have to observe celibacy and restraint of senses, both have to regulate the intake and quality of food, both have to contemplate on the passages of the Upanishads and strive for the knowledge of the Brahman." There were some difference too for instance, the Vanaprastha could take his wife along with him to the forest, at least in the initial stage and could live in a cottage built in the forest, giving himself to contemplation and learning, and to a life of austerity and self-mortification. He was thus a house-holder monk. A. Sanyasi was one who had realised the truth and was in a position to teach it to others. Sanyasa may be regarded as the consummation of the Vanaprastha stage. A Sanyasi was not expected to stick to one place or to provide his own wants. He lived on alms and in return gave instruction to the people of the place where he happened to be. On account of the similarity in the two ashramas in many respects, the stage of Vanaprastha came to be ignored and a householder could directly take to Sanyasa. In the beginning, in the time of the Dharma Sutras and at the advent of Buddhism, t he number of hermits and Parivrajakas was not large. Only those persons took to the life of Sanyasa, who had a real predilection for it. But gradually, mostly due to Buddhist influence, the number became larger and larger till it rose to many millions at the beginning of modern

period. Most of these mendicants are mere beggars who find, in the robes of a Sadhu, a very easy way of collecting charity from pious and credulous householders. In Hinduism, we find mendicants belonging to different sects roaming in all towns and villages throughout the length and breadth of the country. In all sectarian Puranas, there are contained injunctions to give alms to the mendicants, which are supposed to bring a great merit to the donors. In all great places of pilgrimage we come across swarms of able-bodied Sadhus who lead the life of parasites, and are an unmitigated burden upon society that feeds them and gets nothing in return. The institution of mendicancy may be regarded as a part of Pauranik Hinduism.

We also find a large numbers of maths in various places in the country. A math was originally a place where a teacher gave instruction to his pupils in the tenets of a particular sect or in the doctrine of some system of philosophy. A math is not a temple though it may be associated with a temple. Later on, a math came to be a place where a number of Sanyasis resided and carried on their studies and contemplation under the head of the math who was also a Sanyasi. These Hindu maths probably got their clue from Buddhist monasteries on the model of which they were founded.

In the beginning a math had no property attached to it, as Sanyasis were prohibited, by the rules of their ashrama, from owning any property except some articles of personal use. They were also not expected to stay at one place for long. But gradually the devotees and followers of the great Sanyasi teachers endowed the

maths with considerable moveable and immoveable properties. The property is vested in the spiritual preceptor, and thus a house for the school is created and a math constituted. This is how these maths start their existence. Later on the head of the institution selects someone from amongst his disciples to be his successor, he becomes the guru or the head of the institution after the death of the previous preceptor. The head of the math is called a Swami or Mahant or by another similar name. These maths were at one time a great means of catering to the spiritual needs of the people. But this cannot be said of most of the maths at the present day. Of course there are schools attached to these maths, and several Sadhus are fed every day. As a rule the Mahants of many of these maths lead an indolent and sensual life.

PHILOSOPHICAL & OTHER HIGHER IDEAS IN THE PURANAS.

We come across, in the Puranas, discourses on spiritual subjects as well as moral instruction, in the form of stories, on truthfulness, self-restraint, non-injury, compassion and other virtues. In the Bhagavad Purana, the whole of the eleventh book concerns itself with spiritual instruction.

There are, in the Puranas, here and there, popular expositions of the philosophical ideas of the Vedanta, the Sankhya, the Yoga and other systems. We also find in them references to Karma, Bhakti and Jnana as paths to spiritual enlightenment. The Puranaṣ contain various acounts of the creation of the world, the most

important account being on the lines of the Sankhya system. But there are other accounts also. In one of them it is stated that "Brahma assumed four different forms in succession, and from them were produced the demons (Asuras), gods (Devas), forefathers (Pitaras) and mankind (Manushyas). Afterwards He produced all other living beings, creatures and vegetation" (Pusalker, Studies in Epics and Puranas. Introduction IV). Amongst mankind Manu Svayambhuva and a woman Satarupa were the first to be created. They had two sons and one daughter. The daughter was married to Daksha who was one of the nine mind-born sons of Brahma. From them all other beings came into existence.

The fourfold objectives of life, Dharma, Artha, Kama and Moksha are described in most of the Puranas. Dharma in the Puranas, includes pilgrimages to sacred places, Vratas, Dana, expiation for sin, the performance of duties according to one's caste and ashrama and so on.

Artha stands for economic and political welfare. There are in the Puranas, sections on Rajadharma dealing with the duties of kings and methods of administration, rules for the conduct of war and maintenance of peace etc.

Kama includes rules about marriage and love, and duties of women in respect of their husbands and children and other members of the family.

Moksha or salvation is regarded as the highest aim of life. Various methods such as Jnana, Karma, Yoga, and Bhakti are prescribed for the attainment of Moksha.

Besides these topics we also come across a number

of miscellaneous subjects such as poetics, drama, music, architecture, medicine, veterinary science, archery, astrology etc.

The main emphasis in the Puranas, however, as we have shown above, is on mythological and fantastic accounts of the activities of gods and sages, exaggerated descriptions of heavens and hells, and many-sided ceremonialism ; which do not appear to have anything to do with religion or spirituality in the real sense, or even to have any plausible or rational basis whatsoever. The higher teachings on moral and religious subjects are only met with here and there, like an oasis in a vast desert.

We also find in Pauranik Hinduism, a great departure from the spirit of optimism and love of life which characterised the Vedic Aryans. There is now an emphasis laid on renunciation and self-negation, and this pessimistic trend is found throughout the course of post-Vedic Hinduism. The highest goal of life is considered to be Moksha or deliverence from the succession of births and deaths. Non-worldly values are given a higher rank than those of secular life. The virtue of Ahimsa is carried to an absurd length, and occupies a disproportionately large place in the scale of virtues. We also come across ghastly descriptions of the tortures suffered by the evil-doers in hell. The word Narka or hell does not occur even once in the Rigveda, Yajurveda or Samaveda, and only once in the Artharva Veda.

As an instance of Pauranik pessimism, we may refer here to a conversation between father and son as given

in the Markandeya Purana. In the story the son is represented as showing his repugnance to the life of a householder which the father places before him as an ideal. The son "recalls all his previous births and sees salvation only in an escape from the Sansara". He gives a lurid description of Sansara and the unhappy consequences of sins committed in various rebirths, especially of the hells and punishments which await the sinner.

This is the kind of Hinduism which has prevailed in India for the last so many centuries. The true spirit of religion was lost and only the meaningless ceremonialism was all that remained, especially as for as the common people were concerned. It is a religion mostly of superstitious beliefs, meaningless ceremonialism and rigid caste-divisions each regarding the other with suspicion.

This religion of superstition, untouchability and ceremonialism led to some very serious consequences in the life of the people. The emphasis on caste system broke up the sense of unity among the people. When India fell a prey to Muslim invasion, it was only the Rajputs who offered resistance here and there. On account of the social organization prevalent in Pauranik Hinduism, it was the Brahmans and the Kshatriyas who enjoyed all social priviliges. The rest of the people, who formed the bulk of the population, downtrodden as they were, practically remained unconcerned and the subjugation of the country by Muslim invaders. Strange though it may appear, within about ten years after

Mohammad Ghori sat on the throne of Delhi (1191) the whole country from Peshawar to Bengal was brought under Muslim rule.

During this period, a large number of untouchables and the lowest orders of society easily changed over to Islam, after having lived for centuries as outcastes in Hindu society. As appears from Sunya Purana which is believed to have been written in 11th century, many of the people began to think that the gods such as Brahma, Vishnu, Mahadev, Ganesh and others had taken on the inearnation of Mohammad, Adam, Gazi and Muslim saints and were breaking idols and temples because they had become angry with the Brahman priests. There is a note of jubilation in this book at the advent of Islam.

In the Hinduism of this age the true spirit of religion was replaced by mere external ceremonialism. Instead of instructing people on truth, love and compassion, the priestly classes were mainly concerned with questions like untouchability, ban on food and drink, and foreign travel, and increase the vigour of caste system. The great saints and poets who appeared in this age were steeped in devotion and love of God but they had no word to say about the loss of independence in the country. They were perfectly satisfied with what was happening.

If anybody by mistake took food or water touched by a Muslim, he was forthwith regarded as having become a mlechha. A very large number of Hindus were thus forcibly made to embrace Islam. Similarly, no Hindu could retain his religion if he crossed the Attack region.

This ban on foreign travel continued right up to the beginning of the twentieth century.

All initiative was taken away from the people. They began to look upon the gods for help even in matters in which they should have depended on their own efforts. In the Puranas the task of the protection of Dharma was left to the gods. Hundreds of people sought protection in the temple of Som Nath, under the mistaken notion that the god of Som Nath would defend them and the temple against the attack of the enemy. There is no wonder if the Hindus of those times were easily conquered by the outsiders. The invidious social system creating division between man and man, unwholesome ideas of religion and morality, fatalistic and superstitious attitude towards the problems of life made the loss of liberty and vast-scale conversion to Islam almost inevitable.

It was against this form of Hinduism that Swami Dayanand carried on a relentless war. He felt, in the words of Prof. A. R. Wadia, that "the reign and rule of the Puranas must end to give place to deeper religious insight."

REAWAKENING IN HINDUISM

In the modern period a great awakening is taking place in Hinduism. It may be regarded as a period of Hindu renaissance. One more, after centuries of backwardness and stagnation, Hinduism is taking a turn for the better.

Contact with the West. Various factors have contributed to the transformation of Hinduism in the present age. Contact with the West has been a potent cause of revolutionising Indian life. The change which took place in India as a consequence of this contact, within a comparatively short period, was phenomenal. We owe almost all of our legal, administrative, judicial and political institutions to the British contact. Our educational system is almost completely organised on the British model. The study of western science, arts and literature brought about an upheaval in the mentality of the people and turned their attention towards the solution of social and economic problems, and making the world a better place to live in.

All this we owe to the West. But the British were foreign rulers who naturally wanted to govern India as long as they could. They, therefore, accentuated whatever divisions already existed among the peoples of India, and even created new ones. They divided Hindus from Muslims by various ingenious political devices and made the caste system still more rigid by bringing it into prominence in official records. It was made compulsory to mention one's caste in the census columns, or when seeking employment in a government office or admission in a school or college or when filling in any kind of application form. Some castes were declared as martial and the rest were excluded from military and allied services. Under the garb of religious neutrality many old antiquated social

institutions were allowed to continue to the deteriment of social harmony and advancement. Child marriage, polygamy, untouchability and religious superstitions continued to exist as before. Later on, at the instance of Hindu reformers, certain legal measures were adopted against some of these customs. The contrast between the intentions of British government and those of our own government in free India becomes obvious when we note the fact that shortly after the attainment of independence, within a decade, notable changes in social legislation have been made. The Hindu Code Bill has become a law of the land, instituting equality between the sexes in respect of marriage and property rights. Similarly, laws penalising the practice of untouchability and caste discrimination have been placed on the statute book.

It can be safely stated that, if left to themselves, the British rulers would not have done much to remove the social and religious disabilities from which the Hindu society has suffered for the last so many centuries. Shortly after the great Indian revolt of 1857-58, it was proclaimed by the British rulers that the Government would act upon the policy of religious neutrality in social and religious matters. The result of this policy was that during the next ninety years, the government practically did nothing to bring about any change in the social customs and traditions of the Hindus. "For decades," says K. N. Panikkar, "Hindu opinion was protesting against the practice of untouchability or the social customs which segregated certain castes and denied them

normal civil rights. But the religious and social neutrality of the British government stood in the way of effective legislation to give effect to this most neccessary reform. Again, Hindu marriage differed widely all over India. Under the orthodox system no divroce was permitted, nor could widows remarry. Besides, there were also caste restrictions in respect of marriage." (Democracy in the New States, Page 99).

The Work of Indian Reformers. Fortunately there arose, in the last century, a number of great reformers who took up the cause of social and religious reform with great zeal and intensity of conviction. The first of them was Raja Ram Mohan Roy who founded the Brahmo Samaj in 1824. The Arya Samaj was founded in 1883 under the inspiration of Swami Dayanand. It played a most important part in the field of religious and social reform, and in spreading education amongst the people. Later on, there appeared Swami Vivekanand, Mrs. Annie Besant, and in the second decade of the 20th century, Mahatma Gandhi who, besides working for the cause of Indian freedom, did wonderful work for the removal of untouchability and other caste disabilities and for raising the status of Indian womanhood.

On account of the spread of English education amongst Hindu youngmen, many of them became dissatisfied with the prevailing social customs in Hinduism, with the worship of various gods and goddesses, the superstitious practices, and the abominable institutions of enforced widowhood, child marriage and untouchability. "As a result of the contact with the

western thought," says Dr. Altekar, "a section of Hindu society began to feel that, judged by the standard of equity, many social customs and institutions required drastic change. The notions of relative superiority and inferiority that pervaded the caste system were felt to be indefensible. The custom of child marriage which enjoined matrimony upon girls at the tender age of 10 or 12 began to appear as positively harmful to the social mind. If it was permissible for a widower to remarry, it was difficult to understand why child widows should be forced to lead a life of enforced celibacy. The fetters that were imposed on the proprietary rights of women were felt to be unreasonable. Customs like those of Pardah and torture of widows began to provoke a spontaneous protest." (Sources of Hindu Dharma, P. 2.)

Raja Ram Mohan Roy and other leaders of the Brahmo Samaj denounced these social and religious evils and wanted the Hindus to renounce them, but educated as they were in western thought and literature, and having pratically no knowledge of ancient Vedic literature, they had no means to prove that these evil customs were not an essential part of Hinduism and as such they could be easily relinquished without any loss to Hindu religion. The idea had for long been prevalant, and it was kept alive by the interested propaganda of Christian Missionaries that these superstitious practices and social customs were an essential part of Hinduism, and one had to accept them as long as one remained a Hindu. There were some religious organisations, newly set up in India, such as the

Theosophical Society, which tried to establish the spiritual importance of every Hindu belief and practice, good or bad, such as, for instance, child marriage, idol worship, caste system, the Shraddha ceremony, bathing in the holy rivers and so on. The Ramakrishna Mission founded by Swami Vivekanand, preached the gospel of Vedanta in India and abroad, and created a tremendous impression on western audience and Indian young men and women. But the followers of Swami Vivekanand had not much to say on the subject of social and religious reform. The sense of dissatisfaction amongst the educated young men continued to grow and a fairly large number of them embraced the Christian faith as a protest against the evils prevalent in Hinduism. "The first reaction," says Pt. Jawahar Lal, "limited to a small English-educated class was one of admiration and acceptance of about every thing western. Repelled by some of the social customs and practices of Hinduism, many Hindus were attracted towards Christianity and some notable conversions took place in Bengal."

Contribution of Swami Dayanand. It was at about this critical time that Swami Dayanand began his work of social and religious reform. He was a profound scholar of Sanskrit and had made a deep study of the Vedas and the Upanishads as well as of the Puranas and other later works. Unlike the other reformers of the age, he based his work upon his knowledge of the ancient religious literature of India. That was his strong point and it gave him an immense advantage over the other reformers. He had no difficulty in showing

that the religious and social evils like caste system, untouchability, child marriage and various superstitious beliefs were not an essential part of Hinduism. They did not exist amongst the ancient Aryans, and were only later additions made popular by the authors of the Puranas and other similar works. The Vedas, the most authoritative religious scripture of Hinduism, did not give any suport to these religious and social evils. He regarded the Puranas as works of decadent times. He thus succeeded in rehabilitating Hinduism in the eyes of most educated Hindus who had erroneously come to regard Hinduism as identical with and inseparable from social and religious evils.

We now know, as the result of intensive research made by western and eastern scholars into the ancient literature of Hinduism, that the Vedic phase of Hindu culture was comparatively a glorious one. It is not yet possible to be sure about the age when the Vedic culture had its beginning in India, but it is accepted more or less by all oriental scholars that it is many thousand years old and is one of the oldest cultures or perhaps the oldest culture in the world. The Rigveda is universally regarded as the oldest literary document in the world. Even at such a remote period, the ancestors of the present-day Hindus had achieved a great civilisation. Not only were they economically well off, as is evident from numerous verses in the Rigveda, but they had also developed very liberal social, political and cultural institutions. There was no caste system in the early Vedic period nor was there the abhorrent custom of untouchability. There

was no child marriage, and girls could choose their husbands, of course, with the consent of their parents. Educational opportunities, such as they were, were open to boys and girls alike. Among the seers of the Vedic hymns, there are about eighteen lady-seers who hold an equal rank with the other Vedic Rishis. Politically, the Aryans were divided into a number of tribes and each tribe was ruled by its own king. The king was elected by the people and there were democratic checks like the Samitis and the Sabhas upon his power. Kingship, in the Vedic times, was based on popular will. The elders or the members of political assemblies could even dethrone and exile the king. There are a number of references to exiled monarchs in the Rigveda and Atharvaveda. The king was expected to be an embodiment of Dharma, and an example to his subjects in noble living, and to be always watchful over the welfare of his people.

The Aryans were full of zest and the joyousness of living. They loved the beauties of nature and were simply charmed by sublime and magnificent natural phenomena. They prayed for a long and healthy life, for vigorous progeny, for cattle, horses and wealth in all forms. They were equally eager for knowledge and wisdom. They had a firm belief that the world was governed according to the law of righteousness. Some of the Vedic hymns give expression to their deep moral fervour and their thirst for righteous living. The ideal of renunciation and the pessimistic outlook on life came into Hinduism at a much later stage. The Aryans of

the Vedic age were full of hope and optimism and their seers and poets gave expression to this spirit of joyousness and vigorous enterprise in many Vedic hymns. These hymns are a great store-house of wisdom, from which we can acquire a knowledge of the religious, social, political, economic and ethical conceptions of the Vedic period. There can be no doubt of the fact that the Aryans of the Vedic age had built a remarkable culture very much superior to what we find in the days of Pauranik Hinduism.*

Swami Dayanand drew the attention of the people of India to the Vedic phase of Indian Culture. It was something which had not been done before for the last so many centuries. For all this time, the Hindus, the educated and the uneducated alike, had remained satisfied, mostly with what the Puranas and the later-day religious literature gave to them. The majority of the people got their spiritual nourishment from these works. The only encouraging feature of this period was the popularity amongst the Hindus of the Ramayana and the Mahabharata, the heroic and noble characters of which exercised a most wholesome effect upon the Hindus and kept them in the right path, in spite of the not very reputable mythological accounts of the gods and goddesses given in the Puranas and the Up-Puranas.

The great Orientalists of the west had begun the work of Vedic research earlier, but it bore fruit during the last decade of the 19th century and the opening years

*For a detailed study of the ancient Aryan culture, the reader is advised to consult the book 'A Story of Indian Culture' by the author.

of the 20th century. Swami Dayanand may be said to have anticipated the findings of these great scholars by pointing out the greatness of the Vedic culture containing advanced and progressive ideas which, in the words of Maxmuller, "seem to us decidedly modern".

It was most heartening to the young men educated in western literature and science to know that the highest religious thought of India represented by the Vedas and the Upanishads had no place for the prevalent customs and superstitions of Hindusm. A great revolution was thus wrought by Dayanand, in the social and religious thought of Hindu India. As Sri Jayaswal puts it, "The present reformed and rejuvenated Hinduism is solely the gift of Dayanand Saraswati". His work was mostly confined to North India, but accounts of his movements from place to place, and his lectures and religious discussions with the orthodox Pandits, were reported in all important papers of India. In this way his ideas and teachings came to exercise a great influence on the minds of the people in almost all parts of the country.

We have, therefore, chosen Swami Dayanand as the chief representative of renascent Hinduism in the modern period, a reformer who has, in our opinion, made the largest contribution towards changing the mentality and outlook of the Hindus, and arousing in them a strong urge for social and religious change in all its forms

SUPERSTITIONS AND THEIR SOCIAL UTILITY

It is sometimes said in favour of traditional religious customs and rituals as, for instance, going on a pilgrimage

to holy places, that they are a means of strengthening the bonds of cultural unity amongst the people. Impelled by their faith in efficacy of pilgrimage, the Hindus collect in thousands at these places from all parts of the country and thereby develop a feeling of oneness with one another. In the first place, it is questionable whether the large crowds of people, assembling at these places for a ceremonial bath or for a visit to the sacred shrine, really fraternize with one another or imbibe any notion of cultural unity. The whole idea of pilgrimage is based on the belief that one attains to heaven or Moksha, and that all one's sins are purified as the result of pilgrimage. The motive is not to meet other people or to widen one's social or religious horizon. One cannot attain more than what one really wants to attain from such acts. The pilgrims mostly return just as they were when they went out to these places. No educated person of any worth in these days believes that taking one's bath in a sacred place as, for instance, at Kurukshetra on the occasion of solar eclipse or at Allahabad on Kumbha fair, has such a miraculous effect as is claimed for it. We can attain to Moksha and purity only after a long course of disciplined life dedicated to the worship of the Divine and the disinterested service of our fellow men. It has therefore to be conceded that the idea of pilgrimage is based on a huge superstition. We once met an old married couple going on a pilgrimage to Amarnath cave in Kashmir. They were poor and illiterate and could walk only with great discomfort on hard mountain paths. They said that it was their third visit to Shri Amarnath Swami as they had been told that those who visited the

sacred cave thrice in succession were sure to attain salvation. Most of these pilgrims belong to this catagory and are impelled by more or less similar motives. It is doubtful that they imbibe any sense of unity by their visits to sacred places.

In spite of our cultural unity, we have remained hopelessly divided amongst ourselves during all the previous centuries, falling an easy prey to a handful of foreign invaders. Not to speak of unity with people living in far-off places in the north or south of India, we cannot live in unity with people of different castes living in the same village or town. Even in face of common danger, our people have, in various periods of our history, shown themselves incapable of presenting a united front. It is therefore difficult to believe that "the feeling of unity in Hindu society has been fostered by the common pilgrim centres scattered throughout India" or by means of various other religious ceremonials in Pauranik Hinduism.

Take again the belief in numerous gods and goddesses which is found in all sections of orthodox Hindus, and the worship of idols which accompanies this belief. In the present scientific age in which our knowledge of natural forces has reached such a level that we can harness them to our use and comfort, to go on believing in the existence of mythical beings, cannot but be regarded as an irrational superstition which has no meaning in the present set up of scientific knowledge.

We come across beliefs in miracles and superstitions in all religions of the past. It is due to the fact that the

amount of knowledge which even the learned men of past ages possessed was very meagre indeed. They tried to explain the various natural phenomena according to their inadequate notions. With increased scientific knowledge at our disposal, we have naturally to discard many of the theories of nature which are met with in ancient religions. But that does not invalidate the great religious and moral truths contained in these religions.

A comparative study of important religions has revealed that there are certain fundamental basic ideas in all of them, such as the ideas of justice, compassion, self-restraint, devotion and worship etc. The golden rule which ordains that we should treat others as we want them to treat us, is found in all great religions. Similarly, the five well-known moral rules mostly given in negative form ; ....do not kill, do not tell a lie, do not commit adultery, do not steal and do not covet other's wealth—are found, in almost the same form in all civilised religions of the present day world. These basic ideas and moral rules place before us the spirit and essence of religion. But beside these essential elements, we come across, in every organised religion, a large number of superstitious beliefs, narrow racial prejudices and mechanical rites which, in no way, can be regarded as an essential part of religion. These non-essentials in every religion have played a most deplorable part in human history by dividing mankind into fanatically opposed factions. It is on account of these so called religious beliefs that people have waged wars against one another. The Indians cannot forget the

horrors of partition brought about by religious fanaticism soon after the attainment of independence. Swami Dayanand accepted the common fundamental ideas of all religions (see his Introduction to Satyartha Prakash). He was, however, perhaps the first person, in the present age, to point out at the same time the pseudo-religious elements in all religions, and expose their false claim to be put in the category of genuine religious ideas. Swami Dayanand strongly repudiated the various supertitious ideas found in all religions. For this he has been made a target of criticism by many people of all religious denominations. It is held by most Hindus that all religions are true, and so every person must have complete freedom to follow a religion of his choice without any criticism or hindrance from other people. Swami Dayanand also believed that there are certain common religious truths in all religions and they are to be respected wherever they are found ; but he was also convinced that in all religions there were, attached to the precious kernel of great ideas, all sorts of irrational practices and morbid superstitions which had to be weeded out if the true religious spirit were to be given a free scope for expression. When we say that all religions are true, it would be wrong to interpret it to mean that everything in every religion is true, and to give equal worth to all elements, good and bad, found in all established religions. It is a serious problem for the wise men in all religions to consider whether the time has not come to discriminate between the irrational traditional ideas and the ideas which are essentially true and worthy

of acceptance, and to ask their followers to accept the latter and reject the former.

Not to speak of other religions, in Hinduism itself as Swami Dayanand found it, there are to be met with all sorts of irrational features. He subjected some of them to a very severe criticism and regarded many of them as deliberate falsehood propagated with a view to dupe the unsuspecting believers for selfish gain. How otherwise can we account for the belief made popular by the Puranas that a simple act like taking one's bath in a sacred river or pond on a particular day, or keeping fast on Ekadashi or some other day will bring the boon of salvation or heavenly sojourn to the person concerned. The same may be said of numerous other fanciful statements made in the Puranas, about the unbounded merit and reward accruing, for instance, from making a certain mark on the forehead or meeting one's death at a sacred place like Kashi or Prayag. The result of this emphasis on outer acts is that the true character of religion and morality is seldom brought to the notice of the common people. Attention is drawn away from the great uphill task of moral and spiritual improvement to the performance of useless though easier rites and ceremonies. They are fed from day to day on lies and falsehoods which they take for true religion. It can be catagorically stated that mere mechanical performance of prescribed acts and rituals cannot effect any transformation in the character of the people. These rites only feed their religious vanity and do not offer any nourishment to their spirit.

SWAMI DAYANAND—A REFORMER

Swami Dayanand did not profess to be a teacher of new religious truths. His chief role was that of a reformer. The need of reform arises only when the social body is afflicted with various religious and social maladies. The reformer sharply draws the attention of the people to the ills from which they suffer and presents to them a vision of a better state of things. Dayanand turned the attention of the Hindus from current Hinduism to what it was in the Vedic period, free from the excrescences and outgrowths of the later age. The religion on which Dayanand focussed his attention was the Vedic religion. He did not offer to them any new religious scripture of his own composition, but asked them to get their spiritual nourishment from the Vedas, the Upanishads, and the Gita. He also recommended to them the study of the Manu Smriti, the Ramayana, the Mahabharata, the six orthodox systems of Philosophy and other similar works. He cautioned the people against accepting everything found in most of these works, but to exercise their reason and judgment in evaluating the various texts. It is well known that excepting perhaps the Vedas, almost all other works coming down to us from ancient times, have been subjected to various kinds of interpolations and additions from time to time. We have to accept only such things from these ancient texts as appear rational in the light of well-established and authentic knowledge.

We have spoken of Dayanand as a reformer and not as a preacher of new religious truths. Like Swami

Dayanand, Mahatma Gandhi also cannot be said to be a religious teacher or a political philosopher, but he brought about a revolution in the political and social life of the people by his saintly character and epoch-making work. Swami Dayanand, similarly, a little earlier, affected a great revolution in Hindu society by his pure, unselfish life and by his remarkable work of social and religious reform.

MENTAL AND MORAL PROGRESS IN THE VEDIC PERIOD,

Swami Dayanand has spoken very highly of the ancient Vedic culture. It was an advanced culture from various points of view, —economic, political, social, ethical and religious. Apart from these aspects to which we have already made a brief reference, the ancient Aryans had made a notable progress in intellectual matters as well. Swami Dayanand, in his "Introduction to the Commentary of Rigveda" refers to a number of verses from the Rigveda, which indicate that the Vedic sages were acquainted with the gravitational force of the earth. They even knew, according to him, the principles underlying the construction of Vimanas or air vehicles. From some Vedic verses, a number of scholars besides Swami Dayanand have concluded that though there is no indication of the existence of air vehicles in those times, but the mention of such vehicles in these verses shows that the ancient Aryans had formed an idea of such means of transport. Some of these verses are, Rigveda I. 34, 2, I. 34. 12, I. 180. 10. In the verse I. 34. 12 there is a clear reference to "the unbreakable sky-

moving ratha with wheels". This is a mention of a ratha which was capable of moving in Trailoka i.e. the three regions. An ordinary ratha is not expected to move on the earth, in the sky and in the still upper regions.

Similarly, Astronomy and Mathematics had their origin in the Vedas and the Brahmanas. Later on, Indian Astronomy came under the influence of Greek Astronomy, and Indian Mathematics made their way through Arabic writings into Greece and other European countries. Astronomical observations were at first made to determine the time for the performance of various sacrifices. Similarly, the earliest geometrical and arithmetical investigations also arose from certain sacrificial needs.

The intellectual activity evidenced in the Vedic period, went on unabated till the end of the first millenium, as shown in the literature of this period. Winternitz says, "The influence which this literature (Indian Literature) already in ancient times exerted over the mental life of other nations, reaches far beyond the boundaries of India to Further India, to Tibet as far as China, Japan and Korea, and in the South, beyond Ceylon and the Malaya Peninsula, far away to the islands of the Indian and the pacific oceans; while to the West the tracks of Indian mental life may be traced far into Central Asia to Eastern Turkistan where, buried in the sands of the desert, Indian Manuscripts have been found." (Indian Literature, Vol. I, page 1).

Apart from books on religion and philosophy, law and grammar, we find, in ancient India, an abundant

literature on politics and economics, medicine, astrology and astronomy, arithmetic and geometry. Even arts like music, singing, dancing, drama and erotics are found depicted in scientific systems.

The Vedic culture presents to us a synthetic view of life. Along with the delineation of great ideals and aspirations, it lays equal emphasis on the objectives of self-preservation and worldly prosperity as well. There is no place for narrow communal loyalty in the Vedic culture. It embraces the society as a whole and regards the entire people as united in the bonds of common brotherhood. It teaches us to rise above petty individualism and to see the good of oneself in the good of all. There is a large number of Vedic prayers concerned with the welfare of all people. It is significant that in almost all such Vedic verses as contain prayers for the good things of life, the plural term 'we' or 'us' is used instead of 'I' or 'me'. "May we look with friendliness", says one of these verses, "on all living beings and may they all look upon us with friendliness." The idea of universal good, as manifested in the Vedic verses, is in marked contrast to the later-day individualism of Hindu society.

We do not find any trace of injustice or hardness in respect of the Shudras in all the four Vedas. We find in them prayers for the welfare of all classes of people. "May our Brahmans be full of lustre and goodness. May our Kshatriyas and also our Vaishyas and Shudras be full of lustre and goodness. May I also share the lustre spread over the whole people (Yajurveda, 18.48)

In Yajurveda 26.2, there is another prayer as follows :— "May I do good to all people, the Brahmans, the Kshatriyas the Vaishyas and the Shudras, by spreading among them the life-promoting wisdom". The hardness of heart towards the Shudras came later.

As far as ideals of individual life are concerned, there is a great emphasis laid, in the Vedic age, on the virtues of truth and wisdom, sinlessness and purity, faith and devotion, austerity and hardy life, friendliness, charity and fearlessness.

DECLINE OF VEDIC CULTURE

After a period of conflict between the Aryans and the non-Aryans, there succeeded a state of political calm and tranquillity. We now find the sacrificial Karma Kanda or ceremonialism in its full-fledged form. It was at first, a concrete symbol of stable civilisation and well-organised national life. Gradually the sacrifices became more and more complicated, dreary and mechanical, and in course of time lost the interest of the people. Formerly all classes of people used to participate in the great Yajnas and all sorts of wholesome entertainments were provided during these religious functions. We know from Shatpath Brahmana that in the Vajpeya Yajna, for instance, a chariot-race was arranged at mid-day ; and there used to be arranged gambling parties in the Rajasuya Yajna. In the Ashvamedha sacrifice there were held recitations, story-telling and dramatic performances for the recreation of the assembled people. Many lute-players participated in these functions. Thus the sacri-

fices, besides serving a religious purpose, also provided ample means of entertainment, like modern theatre and cinema.

It has often happened that when a country rises to the hights of prosperity and economic well-being, its people, as a rule, become addicted to luxurious living, and lose their old-time vigour and ambition. It seems to have happened to the Aryans also during the period of their political supremacy when all conflicts had practically come to an end. It was a stagnant period without any ambition for expansion on the part of the rulers who gave themselves to the life of luxury and comfort. Their chief concern was the performance of big sacrificcs, while the concern of the priestly class was the getting of sumptuous and large fees from their patrons. They now thought more in terms of their own pecuniary gain instead of looking to the welfare of all classes of society. They were the unworthy descendents of the great and pious Brahmans of the earlier period. There are forty hymns in the Rigveda, which are known as Dana-Stutis in which great kings and warriors have been praised for their munificent gifts to the Brahmans. The work of a priest became a profession like any other profession.

Caste distinctions now began to be accentuated and the sense of unity was lost. There is reason to believe that deliberate efforts were made by the priestly class to keep the people divided so that their own supremacy and that of the Kshatriya kings could be maintained. In the Dharma Sutras and the Smritis different ages for

initiation and different equipments are prescribed for the Brahmacharis of different castes. The Shudras are shamelessly discriminated against and all sorts of unjust ordinances are laid down against them. In the four Vedas, as we have already shown, there is not a single term of reproach against the Shudras who are regarded as an equally important part of the body politic. The Vedic Rishis pray for the welfare of all classes including the Sudras. But in the Shatpath Brahman. (8. 7. 2. 3) we are told that the people of different castes should be kept divided so that they may remain weak and unable to rise against the power of the king. It is quite a new note of division and separatism and it has continued right up to the present times.

We have it on good authority that when the Brahmans from the North colonised the Kerala territory of the South, probably in the 6th century B. C., they introduced caste system amongst the people of the land in a most rigorous fashion. "Every pre-Aryan community was minutely divided into castes and assigned a particular social function. There were castes for preparing flower garlands for the temples, for beating the drum and so on: Within each caste there were sub-castes. The Nairs, Ezhavas and Harijans (the lowest class) each had their own barbers, their own washers and their own men for officiating at birth and death ceremonies. ... The castes were so rigidly exclusive that there was no common social life. Thus did the Nambudris (the Kerala Brahmans) secure their supremacy". A similar experiment, as already indicated, seems to have been tried

towards the end of the Vedic period so that the two higher castes could maintain their unchallenged supermacy over the rest of the community.

In course of time, the study of the Vedas was neglected. Mere repetition of mantras, without knowing their meaning, was considered enough, and all sorts of objectives, moral or immoral, such as heaven, longevity, wealth, progeny, control over women, victory over enemies, prestige and name were promised to the wealthy and well-to-do yajmanas as a reward for the performance of costly sacrifices. As more time passed, the Vedic religion gradually took the form of Pauranik Hinduism which we have described at some length in a previous section. This form of Hinduism has lasted practically up to the present time. Swami Dayanand was probably the first reformer after so many centuries who saw the great defect inherent in current Hinduism, and who once again brought before our vision the lost splendour of the Vedic phase of Hindu culture.

SWAMI DAYANAND AND PROGRESSIVE OUTLOOK.

Though Swami Dayanand has spoken very highly of the Vedic culture, he was not against the acceptance of precious and developed ideas of later-day Hinduism. He has included all valuable later developments in thought and practice, in his great work, the Satyartha Prakash. He quotes at length from Manu Smriti, the various philosophical systems and other valuable works of this period. He stood for progress in all aspects of human life. This aspect of his teaching is neglected by

many followers of the Arya Samaj. They imagine that all great discoveries in science and philosophy were made in the past and that no new contribution can be made in the field of knowledge. They have misunderstood the real purport of Swami Dayanand in eulogising the past. Our past was great, we were a most civilized people in antiquity, and had made a great advance, according to the standards of those times, in the domain of knowledge, political institutions, industry and commerce. Our ancestors presented great ideals of life and devised institutions to give a concrete shape to those ideals. Swami Dayanand rightly brought home to us the greatness of our past. It was like re-finding a lost chapter of our national history. But it was a wrong inference which many Arya Samajists drew from this side of the teachings of Dayanand, namely, that our ancestors knew everything under the heavens and therefore no new discovery in knowledge can be made or is possible. Swami Dayanand never upheld this view. He did not say that the Vedas contained all that could be known. He merely said that the Vedas contained the seeds of all sciences and philosophy and one could visualise a never-ending advance on the basis of the initial seed-like beginning. In the past people wrote books on philosophy, science, medicine and mathematics etc and in the. future also no limitations can be put on the progress that humanity can make in all departments of knowledge and action. The Arya Samaj is a progressive body and it is sad that some persons have completely, misunderstood the real

significance of Dayanand's teachings. If the Arya Samaj did not hold progressive views, it could not have started a large number of schools, colleges and Gurukulas in which the teaching of ancient literature is combined with that of modern sciences and technical arts. We have, therefore, to keep ourselves abreast of all new knowledge which may come to us from other countries.

The Arya Samaj should encourage its scholars in every way to make their own contributions to knowledge without any restriction or hindrance whatsoever. As far as the personal views of Swami Dayanand are concerned, we are of the opinion that he never said anywhere that he was infallible or that it was incumbent upon an Arya Samajist to accept each and every word that he wrote in his books. He allowed freedom of thought to the members of the Arya Samaj by giving them very catholic basic ideas, as embodied in the ten principles of the Arya Samaj. The books, which he wrote, give his own views on various aspects of Indian culture. His views are so advanced and rational that one can agree with most of them without any difficulty whatsoever. No great man, however, unless he desires to be regarded as an infallible master (Guru) or the founder of a new religion, would like his followers to remain fixed and static in their views or to follow him blindly in every respect. He would like them to move forward, to make new discoveries, to take up the thread of progress from the point where he left it, and make new additions to thought and knowledge.

If any member of the Arya Samaj, therefore, were to differ from Swami Dayanand in respect of some of his

views, it would not make him less of an Arya Samajist for that reason. It would be a sad thing if the membership of Arya Samaj were to become a handicap to a person in the pursuit of truth, and prevent him from accepting what he regards as true in any particular field of knowledge.

HIS IMPACT ON PRESENT DAY HINDUISM

As has already been stated, the rejuvenation of Hinduism in the modern period is due to a number of factors, but the contribution of Swami Dayanand is undoubtedly a factor of major importance. He sought and succeeded in finding the impulse for the much needed change, within Hinduism itself—in its ancient Vedic heritage. At the present time the desire for social and religious betterment is manifest on all sides. Caste system, untouchability and social discrimination, though still rampant, have lost their original strength, and will soon fade away. The law of the land has removed all disabilities from women and made them the equal of men in respect of status, property and other rights. This part of Swami Dayanand's programme is on the way to its fulfilment, and nobody, we think, would be happier than he, if he were alive to-day.

He was against idol worship and wanted people to worship God by means of prayer and meditation, somewhat, though not entirely, on the lines on which Mahatma Gandhi used to conduct his morning and evening prayers. Idol worship does not seem to have made people religious in the real sense. The majority

of even the educated youngmen among the Hindus have no adequate knowledge of their religion. Most of them do not even know the names of their chief religious scriptures. The temples which are expected to enlighten people on the various aspects of religion do not perform this function at all. They are the places where idols are kept, washed and worshipped to the accompaniment of the beating of drums, cymbals and other instruments. The people, the young and the old alike, bow before the idols and this is all the religion which they get from this form of worship. The least that should be done in the present circumstances, is to begin the reform of temples by giving proper training to the priests, so that they could instruct the people on the essentials of religion and proper modes of religious worship. "It is an astonishing fact that among Hindus who are said to form an eminently religious community, no religious instruction is regularly imparted to the youth of the community, and boys and girls have to pick up their religion incidentally for themselves from the ceremonies they witness or the sacred stories they chance to hear....The religion that comes to the people untaught through mere ritual, story, song and drama is generally of the vaguest kind and cannot stand its ground when challenged." (D. S. Sharma, Hinduism through the Ages, P. 274.)

The priests who function in temples are mostly illiterate and do not know anything beyond the mechanical performance of rituals. In western countries the clergymen who act as priests in churches, are generaly highly educated men who know their job,

and are a source of comfort and instruction to the people among whom they function. They keep in touch with the members of their parish, visit them in their houses and guide them in their moral and religious difficulties. The most important reform at this time, therefore, consists in the training of the priesthood. Only a highly trained priest, in both the eastern and wastern lore, can convert the temple into a house of God. These educated priests can become leaders of religious thought in their community and free the people from superstitions, prejudices and narrow conceptions of life. The members of the Arya Samaj do not conduct their religious worship by means of idols. The orthodox Hindus cannot be expected to change over all at once from idol worship to worship by means of prayer and meditation. They can, however, receive the real religious spirit on which Swami Dayanand laid great emphasis, by making neccessary changes in the temple worship, to which we have referred. As a matter of fact, many enlightened Hindus do want that the temples should become the real source of religious inspiration.

Another great thing to which Swami Dayanand has contributed a major share in reformed Hinduism, is the gradual weaning of the educated people from superstitious beliefs which are a prominent feature of Pauranik Hinduism. Many people cannot easily imagine what Hinduism would be like, if the various current practices such as going on a pilgrimage, the performance of Shraddha, the observance of fasts and Vratas etc. were to disappear. Already, due partly to the influence of

western education, and partly to the vigorous propaganda of Swami Dayanand and the Arya Samaj, most of these beliefs have been greatly weakened and a fairly large number of Hindus have relinquished them without any disadvantage to themselves or to their community. It would be wrong to cling to any irrational belief or practice under the mistaken notion that its surrender would lead to the disruption of social unity. No good, either to the individual or to the community, can be achieved on the foundations of falsehood and untruth.

Dayanand has very much minimised the importance of religious rites and ceremonies. Ritualism plays a great part in Hinduism. Rituals no doubt are an aid to religion but if they become too numerous and complicated, they make themselves into a substitute of religion and choke its very life. Most people, instead of trying to cultivate a life of virtue and of constant awareness of God are easily satisfied with the mere performance of rituals. It gives the false impression that one can become religious without becoming moral. It leads to a sense of vanity and self-righteousness, which is fatal to the cultivation of a true spiritual life. There is only one ritual in the Arya Samaj and that is the performance of havan at all important events in life such as birth, marriage, death and on all other important occasions. Excessive addiction to ceremonialism is a social malady and a divergence from the pursuit of true religious value.

For many centuries past the Hindus erroneously believed that Hinduism was a non-missionary religion. Of course it has now become a common-place in Indian

scholarship that all the races and peoples of foreign origin who came into India from time to time before the Muslims, were absorbed into Hinduism, but this knowledge, it seems, was not available seventy or eighty years ago. People were, therefore, naturally taken by surprise when Swami Dayanand gave instances from ancient history to show that Hinduism had been a vigorous missionary religion in the past. His view has been fully corroborated by later research. There is an important and well-known Vedic injunction to "make the whole world Aryan" (कृण्वन्तो विश्वमार्यं). It is an unmistakable indication of the zeal of the ancient Aryans to absorb foreign elements into their culture. They did absorb the foreign elements as they came into contact with them from time to time. The process began when Aryans converted the Dravidians and other non-Aryans whom they met in their adventurous march to the east and south of India. Later on the Greeks, the Sakas, the Kushans, the Huns and various other tribes were absorbed. There are many inscriptions and coins representing these foreign kings as the followers of Hinduism. This went on till the advent of Islam. The Muslims followed a religion which itself believes in proselytizing the non-believers. When they established themselves in Sind in the eighth century, a large number of Hindus were converted to Islam. Later on, all these converts were taken back into Hinduism. In the *Dewala Smriti* and the *Agni Purana*, the process of reconversion is given in detail. This fact is also admitted by a number of Muslim historians.

Gradually as the caste system became rigid, there appeared an unwillingness to take back into Hinduism the people who had been converted. We find the Muslim scholar Al Beruni who came to India in the twelfth century, making a reference to this new point of view which was finding favour amongst the conservative section of the Hindus, namely, that if a high caste Hindu took food at the hands of a non-Hindu, he became impure and contaminated for ever. So from the twelfth century onwards or even earlier we find that reconversion though not altogether given up, had become a very rare phenomenon till Swami Dayanand brought it to the notice of the people again.

As a matter of fact, a number of born Moslems were converted to the Hindu faith by the Arya Samajists but they could not be assimilated and many of them returned to their old faith. The main obstacle was the caste system which even the Arya Samajists could not totally give up in spite of its strong repudiation by Dayanand.

Hinduism has latterly been content to remain, as Shri D. S. Sharma says, "as only an ethnic religion.. But in future it should become a credal religion also as it once was, when it took into its bosom unnumbered hordes of foreign invaders who came through the north-western passes into India. Only the creed to be enforced should be as flexible as possible. There is no reason, for instance, why all those who want to come into our fold should be confined to the creed of the Arya Samaj. Some might prefer the later developments in

Hinduism like Vaisnavism or the philosophy of Shankar. Therefore, there should be absolute freedom for any stranger to come into any room of our spacious mansion and make himself comfortable there". (Hinduism through the Ages, p. 277).

It is sad to find that on account of negligence and wrong attitude of the Hindu leaders in this matter, a large number of people from among the aborigines and the lower classes are being daily converted to Christianity through fair or foul means. It is a very important matter for the leaders of Hinduism to ponder upon. The least that they should do is to take back all those people who were once Hindus and were later converted to alien religions. Of course, there should be no bar upon any non-Hindu from being admitted into Hinduism if he is keen on becoming a Hindu.

A remarkable change is noticable in the mentality of present-day Hinduism. The people are being drawn from the futile doctrine of renunciation, to the pursuit of the goal of a well-integrated life. We find in modern India, the revival of the spirit of buoyancy, and increasing repulsion from other-worldliness and a life of inaction, the growth of a deep interest in the affairs of the world and a desire to ameliorate all aspects of life. The period of medieval darkness is over and we find the people of India taking a very great interest in all schemes of mcral and material welfare. The present-day Hindus have

begun to give great importance to the values of Artha (wealth) and Kama (enjoyment) along with those of Dharma (Morality) and Moksha (spirituality or religion). It is no exaggeration to say that the teachings of Swami Dayanand have had a share in the transformation of the present-day Hinduism in all aspects of life.

CHAPTER I

A Short Biography

SWAMI DAYANAND, the illustrious founder of the Arya Samaj, was born at Tankara (Gujrat) in 1824, of very devout Brahmin parents. He was brought up on strict orthodox lines. When he was fourteen years of age, his father asked him to keep a complete fast on the Shivaratri day, and to observe an all-night vigil in honour of Lord Shiva. As Mulshankar (the name given to him by his parents) sat through the night in front of the idol of Siva, making many efforts to keep himself awake, while all other devotees including his father had fallen asleep, a very serious doubt crept into his mind. Could the stone image before him really be the great God of Kailash ? The immediate cause was the sight of mice running freely on the idol and taking away the offerings placed before it. He awakened his father and placed his doubts before him ; but the explanation which the father gave, did not satisfy him. He went home and broke his fast. So great was his revulsion against image worship after this event that he never went to a temple for worship again. The other two incidents, which had a profound influence upon him, were the deaths in close succession of his sister and of his uncle, both of whom, he loved very dearly. These events aroused a keen desire in his mind to devote himself to the search for

the solution of the great mysteries of life. He now applied himself earnestly to the study of Sanskrit grammar and literature. His parents, however, began to suspect that the boy was developing a tendency towards renunciation and so they decided to tie him in the bond of wedlock. When they did not listen to his protests and a day was fixed for marriage, Mulshankar ran away from home, became a Sadhu and changed his name. This happened in 1845.

The next fifteen years were spent in wandering from place to place in search of knowledge. He visited all the renowned temples, monasteries, ashrams in Northern India, and met all sorts of Sadhus and Sanyasis. During this period, he gave himself to the study of Vedanta philosophy and the practice of yoga under very able teachers. He became a great adept in yoga, and even in later life, when he was kept busy from morn to night in giving discourses and holding discussions with people of divergent faiths, he used to engage himself in yogic meditation in early morning hours almost every day. He often said that the stupendous amount of work which he could do was the result of the unfailing practice of yogic exercises.

In his search for teachers of philosophy and religion he put himself to extreme hardships, climbing lofty mountains, penetrating into the innermost regions of the Himalayas and crossing a number of times the great valleys of the Ganges and the Narmada in severe winter months, when the mountains all around were covered with snow. He lived up to the highest ideals of Sanyas,

and not even his worst enemies could throw any doubt on the purity and nobility of his life.

After fifteen years of wandering from place to place, during which he acquired a deep insight into the various aspects of Hinduism, he came to Mathura, where he become the disciple of Swami Virjanand, a profound scholar of Sanskrit language and a severe critic of the popular Hinduism of his day. It was under the guidance of Swami Vijanand that the future programme of Dayanand took definite shape. Thus inspired, he devoted himsetf wholeheartedly to the propagation of ancient Aryan faith among the people at large. He spent three years with Virjanand.

Now began the period of active teaching. He visited important cities in all the provinces of Northern India: and everywhere his line of work was more or less the same. He denounced idolatry as having no sanction in the Vedas and preached the worship of one God. He severely attacked the religious superstitions and the various social evils which had crept into Hinduism and had come to be looked upon as its inseparable part. He held religious discussions with the learned pandits and could easily convince them and the audience about the weakness of their position. "With his striking features, his powerfully built body, his remarkable voice and his fluent Sanskrit, he attracted thousands of people in his meetings," and made a tremendous impression on their minds. The impression which he created in the places visited by him will become evident from the accounts which appeared in some of the papers of those times.

The *Dharmatatva*, a Calcutta organ of the Brahmo Samaj, wrote under the head "Dayanand Saraswati" in its issue of March 1873 as follows :

"He (Dayanand) is a profound scholar and master of the Hindu shastras and the Sanskrit language. He has extraordinary patience and power to attract people. Though he is a complete stranger to western science, his discourses on all subjects are so excellent that people are struck with amazement. He preaches that salvation is only possible by worshipping God who is pure intelligence and without a body, and that worship consists in purity of mind, control of senses, concentration, love, prayer and meditation. He condemns child marriage as the root of most of the evils. A girl according to him should be educatad, and married at the age of twenty. If a widow wants to remarry, she should be allowed to do so. Dayanand is not merely a lecturer. One sees in him heroism, greatness, dignity and high ideals. He spends five or six hours every day in meditation and communion with God. He has perfect self-control. He believes implicitly in the Vedas and rebirth. May God fulfil his wishes. Through him, the Hindu race will be regenerated."

Here is another account published in a paper at Lahore when Swami Dayanand visited that place in July 1877.

"Swamiji's teachings are very liberal and are acceptable to the educated people........ His views are more advanced even than those of the English educated people. He desires not only religious reforms but also

social reforms and removal of such evils as child marriage and the caste system. He says that until the women are educated and become free from the bonds of purdah, it is useless to hope for any perceptible progress in the country. He seems to be an enthusiastic advocate of national reforms and an enthusiastic lover of his nation".

Swami Dayanand established the first Arya Samaj at Bombay on 10th April, 1875. The latter part of his life was spent in organising Arya Samajas at different places in the country. In 1877, Swamiji reached Lahore. In the Punjab he received a most enthusiastic response. Within a short time, Arya Samajas were established in all the important cities of the province and a large number of people were enlisted as their members. He also visited U. P., Bombay, Bihar, Bengal, Central Provinces, Rajputana. Arya Samajas were established in all these provinces as well.

Swami Dayanand met with fierce opposition at the hands of his opponents. He had to bear abuse, calumny and virulent antagonism. Many attempts were made on his life, but he bore all opposition with patience and dauntless courage. As Swami Dayanand denounced idol worship and other religious superstitions, the Brahmin priests who depended for their lovelihood on these superstitious practices, became his enemies and in many places they incited hired ruffians to make murderous assaults on his life. Poison was administered to him many a time but on each occasion excepting of course the last, he came to know of it in

time and expelled it from his system.

He had a passionate love of truth and preached if at all times with complete disregard to its adverse consequence upon himself. Many temptations were offered to him, on the condition that he gave up the denunciation of idol worship. Maharana Sajjan Singh of Mewar was a great admirer of Swamiji. He practically became his disciple and took lessons from him every day when Swami Dayanand spent some time at Udaipur. One day the Maharana suggested to Swamiji that if he agreed to become the mahant of the state temple of Mahadeva he would command an income of lacs of rupees and in a way the whole state of Mewar would become subordinate to him. "You hold out this temptation to me" replied the Swami, "and want me to go against what I believe to be the Divine command for me. The small state of yours I can easily leave behind me within an hour but where can I go if I violate the command of the all pervading Divine power. My life is dedicated to the propagation oı truth. Please do not talk to me like this again." The Maharana was simply dumbfounded to receive this unexpected reply.

Truth wa s the dominant passion of his life. He went about preaching it in a fearless manner. Death or calumny had no fears for him. Madame Blavatsky wrote of him in her book "*From the Caves and Jungles of Hindustan*" as follows :

"One is inclined to think that this wonderful Hindu bears a charmed life, so careless is he of raising the

worst human passions. Truly a marble statue could not be less moved by the raging wrath of the crowds. We saw him once at work. He sent . way all his faithful followers, and forbade them either to watch over him or to defend him, and stood alone before the infuriated crowd, facing calmly the mob ready to spring upon him and tear him to pieces". Needless to say that the mob was cowed down at the sight of this superb demonstration of fearlessness, and quietly left the place.

Dayanand's heart was full of compassion and love for mankind. He always forgave his enemies. As one reads his biography, one is struck by the fact that never once did he try to have those persons arrested and punished who administered poison to him, or in other ways tried to take his life or assault him. In fact when some of these people were actually arrested, he got them released. He had no personal grudge against anybody nor did he regard anybody as his enemy. Once a Brahmin made it his daily practice to abuse him to his face, and every time Swamiji offered him sweets. This went on for some days and then one day, the Brahmin felt ashamed of his conduct, fell at his feet and begged his forgiveness.

According to Swami Dayanand, religion was incomplete without love of man. The spirit of service was essential to a life of religion. One day an aged Brahmin, who lived on the banks of the Ganges at Benares, told Swamiji that if he did not bother himself about doing good to others, he could obtain salvation even in this birth. "I am not anxious" replied

Dayanand, "to obtain (salvation) *Moksha* for myself. I am anxious about the deliverance of lacs of people, who are poor, weak and are suffering. I don't mind, if I have to take birth several times, if I can only bring a little happiness to these poor and ignorant people."

In a letter dated 7th March, 1883 to Mr. Samarth Das, Swamiji writes : "If you continue to write pessimistic things or act in that way, you will be doing a great harm to the world. So far as I am concerned, the work of public good, which I have undertaken, I will continue as far as possible to do till life lasts. Nay, I will do it in my future births too."

When Swami Vivekanand after his return from the tour of America asked the sanyasis of the Ramakrishna Mission of Calcutta to devote themselves to acts of public welfare, some of them were taken by surprise and could not easily follow why men of renunciation, such as the Sanyasis were, should take interest in the affairs of mankind and actively help people in distress. Swami Dayanand though a sanyasi had already made love and service of mankind an essential part of his life.

So the great swami went about in his spirit of dedication and complete selflessness, fulfilling his mission of propagating truth and the noble ideals of life. His daily life was an inspiration to all those who came in close contact with him. He never seemed to be in a hurry, impatient, angry or upset at any time. He was alway calm and unruffled and a soft smile could be always seen irradiating his face. He had a ready wit,

possessed a keen sense of humour and often sent his audience into peals of laughter by relating humorous incidents and by his witty remarks. At a meeting, when Swamiji was sitting on the floor with other people, a Pandit came and took his seat on the raised platform. He would not come down even when the people asked him to do so. "Let him remain sitting there" said Swami Dayanand, "if a high seat indicated greater learning, then look at the crow sitting on the tree above, he must be more learned than the Pandit becduse he is occupying a still higher seat !"

A lettler written by Shri Manmath Nath Chowdhury in 1900 A. D. to Shri Devendra Nath Mukhopadhya, author of the well-known biography of Swami Dayanand, thus recalls Swami Dayanand's memory.

"I was with him in 1873 A. D. and now it is 1900. During these twenty-seven years, I have travelled a lot in India, but have not met a single soul who could approach that great man. As I lived with him for some time, I know certain things which many do not know. He used to sleep on grass and was regular in practising yoga for a long time every morning. I had permission to stay with him at the time. His daily life was this. He used to get up at about 3.0 a.m. and till morning practised yoga. He used to see visitors from 9.0 a.m. to 12.0 noon. He then had his meals. From 1.0 p.m. again, he used to see visitors and discuss things with them. I am surprised that he did not get cancer of the throat. I have known no one who continuously talked and discussed in Sanskrit for so many hours every day for years. At

night he seldom ate much. If any one treated others, high or low in the same way, it was he. He did not even know what special treatment of any particular man was. I saw rajas and maharajas come to him, but the Swami treated them just like other men. In no way did he show them special respect. If I had not the honour to live with him continuously for some time, I should never have known what is meant by equality of treatment and what strength of character means. It is India's misfortune, that he met with a premature death. No one can replace him. There is no one so full of devotion to a cause, so full of whole-hearted, single-minded application and such utter selflessness as he was. I deeply cherish his memory."

In the last years of his life, Swami Dayanand toured through a number of State of Rajputana. Some of the maharajas of these states became his disciples. Maharana Sajjan Singh of Udaipur and Maharaja Nahar Singh of Shahpur acknowledged him as their spiritual teacher and secured immense benefit from his teachings. Maharaja Pratap Singh of Idar used to say "Swamiji ne mujh ko admi bana diya." (Swamiji has made a man of me). Swami Dayanand heartily desired take the Rajput princes all over India should lead noble and pure lives and dedicate themselves to the welfare of their subjects. This used to be an important topic of discussion in his talks and discourses to the princes who came in contact with him. His great solicitude for the princes will become apparent from the following extract from a letter, which he wrote to the Maharaja of

Jodhpur, when he came to know, that he was not leading a proper life due to the bad influence of some men and women at his court.

"It is a matter of good fortune that you possess many praiseworthy qualities and good health, and enjoy supreme authority over a kingdom, but it is a matter of sorrow that though you are so intelligent, you remain occupied with a number of undesirable things, such as drinking, association with bad women, kite flying and other evils. You do not devote as you should at least six hours to the work of the state...... There are some other things also about you, which cause me sorrow and pain. The *Gita* says that whatever good or bad the high-placed people do, the common people copy their example. Whatever standard the great set, the generality of men follow. There is the general saying as the king so the subjects'. It follows that high placed people should be very careful of their thought and conduct. Therefore, by refraining from wasting your valuable time in drinking and other evil things, by employing it in doing justice and protecting your people, you will become deserving of gratitude from your subjects and receive praise from all. It is no good, writing more to a man of intelligence.

Never before in his life had the Maharaja had to face such a rebuke from another person, but it proceeded from sincerity of heart, and the Maharaja appreciated the spirit of love which actuated the writing of this letter. But the persons who reaped benefit from the dissolute life of the Maharaja became alarmed, and a conspiracy was hatched against the life of Swami

Dayanand, and this time it succeeded. Poison was administered to him and it was only after a time that he suspected foul play. He tried to throw out the poison by vomitting as he had previously done on a number of occasions, but it had no effect. No medicine seemed to do him any good. He was removed to Mount Abu and from there he was taken to Ajmir, where he died on the morning of 30th October, 1883. Thus ended one of the noblest of lives,—an embodiment of selflessness, profound wisdom, unalloyed purity and goodness.

CONDITIONS IN INDIA

For the right appraisal of the work and teachings of Swami Dayanand, it is necessary to have an idea of the religious and social conditions prevalent in Hindu India when he began his work of reform. We have already, in the introduction, dwelt at some length, on these conditions. We shall here only summarise the account, in order to provide a proper perspective to his work and teachings. Many undesirable customs were regarded as an essential part of Hinduism. In the social sphere, caste system, untouchability, prohibition of foreign travel, child marriage, inferior and dependent status of women, enforced widowhood, etc., were accepted as matters of divine dispensation. Inter-dining and Inter-caste marriages were strictly forbidden. In the religious sphere, idol worship was a common method of worship and shudras and untouchables were excluded from the temples. The priestly class dominated the religious and

social life of the people at large. The religion of the common man mostly consisted of rigid ceremonialism, superstitious practices, pilgrimages, fasts, indiscriminate charity to the Brahmins and the Sadhus, and of a blind belief in the fantastic and sometimes indecent stories of gods and goddesses as contained in the Puranas.

It might appear strange to a modern educated young man, that sixty or seventy years ago, these things did not evoke any criticism from the better class of people. As a matter of fact, the so-called religious leaders of Hinduism, the members of the priestly order, supported by the pandits of Benares, were interested in keeping unchanged the established order of things, as it brought them pecuniary gains and rewards in the form of charity and religious fees. Apart from the internal disease in the form of priestly domination, there were the Christian missonaries, who with the tacit backing of European officials, were reaping a rich harvest by the religious conversion of chiefly the lower classes of Hindus.

When the Hindu young men began to receive English education and developed a critical attitude towards the old established customs and traditions, there grew a common tendency amongst them to deprecate Hinduism as inferior to Christianity and Islam. The first reactions of western education, were very unwholesome and depressing. It was a period of despair and general demoralization. A number of great men appeared on the Indian soil toward as the end of the last century, who tried to dissipate the gloom; but the

greatest of them all, one who had the largest share in rebuilding the lost feeling of self respect among the Hindus was Dayanand. "Dayanand Saraswati" says Shri K. M. Munshi, "was the first great architect of modern India. His learning was stupendous and his character great. But about all this, his vision was clearer and broader than is generally given to nation makers. In the new Hinduism of today, in the Indian nationalism, in the method of Mahatma Gandhi, we can trace the influence of Swamiji's unerring vision and statesmanship."

The death of Swami Dayanand took place in 1883. The Indian National Congress had not yet been born. No one gave any thought to political freedom, economic welfare of the masses, or a common language for India. A great seer that he was, Dayanand gave a vocal expression to all the potent ideas which in later-day nationalism were to exercise such a tremendous effect upon the Indian people. He asked people to use swadeshi, when nobody else paid any attention to it. In December 1837 at Aligarh when Madho Singh, son of Thakur Bhopal Singh, came to Swamiji dressed in foreign clothes, the latter advised him to put on Swadeshi clothes. We find him laying a great emphasis on swadeshi in a number of places in his important works.

Dayanand was a Gujrati by birth and for a long time he gave his discourses in Sanskrit. He did not know Hindi at that time, but with the vision of a sage he realized that only Hindi could be the common language of a free united India. He learnt Hindi and thereafter

he used it for his lectures and religious discussions.

When Urdu was rampant throughout, and English was gradually making its way, he published all his works in Hindi. He laid a great stress on Hindi in his letters. The Arya Samaj took up the cause of Hindi and made it the medium of religious discourses in all parts of North India. Not only in India, but even outside India, wherever the mission of Arya Samaj made its way, Hindi was adopted as the language of religious propaganda. It was after many decades that Mahatma Gandhi brought Hindi into prominence again and recommended to the people to use it in speaking and writing, as a substitute for the English language.

In the life-time of Dayanand, the country was intellectually and morally in a most backward state. All sorts of superstitions were rampant among the people. Before any political movement for freedom could be started, it was necessary to work for the intellectual and spiritual emancipation of the people and Dayanand took upon himself the great task of making the people intellectually and socially free. But at the same time he laid a great stress upon the need of political freedom. He wrote in the *Satyartha Prakash*, "whatever anybody may say, self-government is best. A government by foreigners, however impartial, benevolent, just and sympathetic it may be, can never be a source of happiness". He was the first person to raise the slogan, that 'good government is no substitue for self-government.'

Before Dayanand began his work, another

movement known as Brahmo Samaj was already in the field. It was inspired by a great reforming zeal. It carried on a vigorous campaign for social reform, but it owed its origin to the influence of western education and, therefore, it had no means of establishing the credentials of Hindu religion in the minds of the educated people. "Of course we should give up the degrading social and religious customs," they argued, "but if they are a part and parcel of Hinduism, it does not help it in any way." Brahmo Samaj had no answer to the evergrowing doubts and misgivings of the educated young men. The mere eradication of social evils would not restore Hinduism to its old prestige, if it were granted that they were the inseparable part of it. Hinduism seemed to have lost its prestige for ever.

It was in the midst of these circumstances that Swami Dayanand appeared on the scene. He authoritatively declared that religious superstitions and social evils like caste system, untouchability and child marriage were no part of Hinduism. The Hindus in the early Vedic age were entirely free from them. He repudiated the *Puranas* as works of decadent times and once again restored to their position of eminence the *Vedas*, which had always been venerated by the Hindus as their highest authority in religion but which, of late, had been relegated to the background. He had not the slightest difficulty in showing that the Vedas, the highest religious scriptures of the Hindus did not give the least support to the pernicious religious practices and social customs, which had crept into Hindu Society in later times.

Here was a reformer who appeared on the Indian scene after many centuries of religious ignorance, and who went about preaching fearlessly the teachings of the Vedas, denouncing idol worship and the *Puranas*, which were a source of all the silly supersitions, which besmirched the fair name of Hindu Dharma in the succeeding centuries. As a writer puts it, "he removed the so called religious scriptures layer by layer and laid bare the real scriptures of Hindus, the four Samhitas. This removed a great confusion prevalent at the time of his advent when anything in Sanskrit was supposed to be sacred and given the position of a scripture." The *Puranas* and other similar literature were made popular by the patronage of the priestly class and, in course of time they largely replaced the genuine religious scriptures like the *Vedas*, the *Upanishads* and even the *Gita*.

The whirlwind campaign of Dayanand roused tremendous enthusiasm wherever he want. It was a most welcome revelation especially to the young people educated in western literature and science, that the highest religious thought of India had no place for the prevalent customs and supersititions which were only later accretions, and could be easily renounced without any loss to Hinduism. It was a great revolution, that Dayanand wrought in the social and religious thought of Hindu India. People who opposed him most, accepted consciously or unconsciously one aspect of his teaching today, another aspect tomorrow, so that within a few years after his death, the Hindus all over the country became leavened with the spirit of Dayanand's teachings.

Shri J. S. Jayeswal says, "the present reformed and rejuvenated Hinduism is solely the gift of Dayanand Saraswati." As he moved from place to place delivering his powerful discourses and challenging orthodox powers to hold religious discussions with him, his movements and activities were reported at great length in all the important newspapers of India. In this way, his ideas and teachings came to exercise a most powerful influence on the minds of the people, and whether they liked it or not, a great transformation took place in their mental structure and in their ways of thinking, as a consequence of the impact of these new ideas.

We would end this chapter with an account of a *Shastrarth* (religious discussion) which took place at Benares, the citadel of Hindu orthodoxy, between Swami Dayanand on the one hand and about three hundred learned pandits of Benares on the other. This will convey a graphic idea of the way in which Dayanand, singlehanded and without any support, moral or otherwise, carried on his herculean task of demolishing the strongly entrenched superstitious and pernicious customs of the day. He was veritably a superman, and it was his strong unbounded faith in the righteousness of his cause that enabled him to accomplish the stupendous work which he had undertaken. The account of the *Shastrarth* is reproduced here from the then well-known Calcutta paper, the "Hindu Patriot" of 17th January 1870.

'The stronghold of Hindu idolatry and bigotry,

which, according to Hindu mythology, stands on the trident of Shiva and is, therefore, not subject to the influence of earthquakes, has lately been shaken to its foundations by the appearance of a sage from Gujarat. The name of this great personage is Dayanand Saraswati. He considers the *Vedas* to be the only religious books worthy of regard and styles the *Puranas* as cunningly devised fables, the inventions of some shrewd Brahmans at a later period, for the subserving of their selfish motives. The *Vedas*, says he, entirely ignore idol worship and he challenges the pandits and great men of Benares to meet him in argument. Some time ago, the Maharaja of Ramnagar held a meeting in which he invited the great Pandits and the elite of Benares. Finding it impossible to overcome the great man in regular discussion, the Pandits resorted to the adoption of a sinister course to subserve their purpose. They made over to the sage an extract from the *Puranas* that savoured of idolatry, saying that it was a text from the Vedas. He was pondering over it, when the host of Pandits headed by the Maharaja himself, clapped their hands signifying the defeat of the great Pandit in the religious warfare. Though mortified greatly at the unmanly conduct and bad treatment of the Maharaja, Dayanand Saraswati has not lost courage. Though alone, he stands undaunted in the midst of a host of opponents".

When B. Rajani Kant Mukhopadhyaya protested to the Maharaja about the conduct of the Pandits at the Shastrarth, "the Maharaja", continues the Hindu Patriot,

"without feeling any shame stated that when it became clear to everyone how the Pandits fared in the Shastrarth, it had become incumbent on him to defend by all possible means the popular religion."

Similar accounts of the Shastrarth appeared in a number of important papers. The Pioneer of Allahabad among other things said, "The Swami maintained that the *Vedas* do not inculcate idolatry and the Pandits did not produce at the time, nor they have produced since, a single passage from the *Vedas*, that would dislodge the Swami from his position."

Dayanand visited Benares five times after this occasion and on each occasion challenged the Pandits to a discussion, but no one came forward to accept his challenge.

The Maharaja seemed to have felt a great remorse for his unseemly conduct at the Shastrarth. When Dayanand came to Benares the second time, the Maharaja requested the Swami to visit him and sent one of the senior officials and a carriage to escort him. He showed great respect to him, touched his feet in reverence, and begged his pardon for what had happened at the Shastrarth through his behaviour.

Thus the Swami went on with his work, exposing himself to great risks almost every day. "He was so successful", says Romain Rolland, "that in five years Northern India was completely changed."

Swami Dayanand made an extensive study of the different periods of Hindu culture. He found the

current Hinduism subsisting more or less for the last two thousand years or so, but he was simply thrilled to discover that for many centuries before that, Hinduism or Vedic religion as it was then called was immune from all the later day accretions, and was a different thing in many respects. It is very refreshing to find that recent researches have corroborated almost all the important findings of Dayanand in the field of Vedic religion.

Swami Dayanand was powerfully affected by this vision of ancient Hinduism, and he made it a mission of his life to place it before his countrymen, so that they could see for themselves, what their own culture was in good old times. It was a resurgent Hinduism that came into being after he had completed his life work.

In the succeeding chapters we shall attempt to give an exposition of his conception of religion, his metaphysical and ethical views, his social and political philosophy, and the principles of the Arya Samaj which he founded with a concluding chapter to sum up the whole discussion.

CHAPTER II

Dayanand's Conception of Religion,

Reason and Faith. Swami Dayanand believed that reason and faith are not hostile to each other. Of course in many ways faith goes beyond reason, but no belief is to be accepted if it contradicts the findings of reason.

It is not an easy matter to rise above our emotional attachments to prejudices and beliefs inheried from the past, but it is absolutely necessary to exercise a dispassionate and independent judgment in respect of our beliefs, if we are to make any progress as human beings. The majority of people suffer from a literal inability to listen to reason. As a writer puts it, "When there are strong pre-possessions, no amount of evidence produces any effect." Modern psychology has made us familiar with the unconscious mechanism of rationalisation by which even otherwise intelligent people justify their irrational behaviour. "Irrationalism," says Bertrand Russel, "almost always arises from the desire to assert something for which there is no evidence or deny something for which there is a very good evidence." It is a fact that only very few people can think impartially about any subject. These few people owe a duty to their fellow human beings to be always pulling them up from

irrationalism as far as it lies in their power. In the past, it seems, Hinduism has carried its love of catholicity and respect for all faiths too far. "In the name of religion", says Radhakrishnan, "we have carefully protected superstitious rites and customs". All supersitions have their birth in blind irrationalism. Dayanand exhorted people to examine their beliefs on the touchstone of reason and experience and reject them if they were found to be irrational.

The repudiation of superstition in all its forms formed the negative aspect of his teaching on religion. It was like uprooting the luxuriant growth of weeds to make room for healthy plants. Many sensitive people criticise him for having exposed the superstitions inherent in all religions and thereby wounding the religious susceptibilities of their followers. The aim of Swami Dayanand was to separate the kernel of religion from the chaff of debasing overgrowth which choke the religious life of people everywhere. The Swami strongly felt that as long as these superstitious beliefs continue to hold the field, the true spirit of religion would not have the slightest chance to assert itself. He had a great respect for the truths in all religions. He says in the introduction to the *Satyartha Prakash*, "It is my belief that whatever is true in any religion is worthy of acceptance by all of us and only those things which are false and have crept into all religions have been criticised in this book." To Dayanand all men were equal. He made no distinction between the followers of Hinduism, Christianity,

Islam and other religions. He wanted the good of all and, therefore, he pointed out the superstitious parts of the teachings of all these religions with a view to make people realize the priceless gems of religion, which lay covered under the layers of irrational beliefs. The rise of science, and the disillusionment brought about by the failure of current religions—overlaid as they are with thick layers of superstition—to meet the spiritual needs of modern man, has led, in the western countries especially, to the repudiation of religion itself. All thoughtful people feel it, but very few people have the courage to raise their voice against the influence of these pseudo-religious elements. Amongst the Hindus alone, there are no less than a thousand sects. The leaders of most of them, under the garb of religious dispensation, exploit the simple-minded credulity of their followers for their own selfish ends. Swami Dayanand examined their pretensions in the *Satyartha Prakash*. It was after reading in it of the corrupt practices of some of these sects that people first of all came to know of their hypocritical and false character.

Should we, then, wait till all people receive education in sciences and thereby learn to distinguish between what is rational and what is against reason? Or should something be done right now to make the common people see the futility and the extremely injurious effects of the various irrational beliefs and practices, more or less on the lines of the Arya Samaj? There is no reason why the common people should be allowed to be fed any longer on lies, falsehoods and deceptions. We some-

times put a very low estimate on the intelligence of an average man, which is not just. On the occasion of the Kumbh fair held at Allahabad some time ago, about forty lacs of people assembled from all parts of India. It must be remembered that this huge multitude had gathered at Allahabad under the superstitious belief that a person's sins are washed away if he or she takes a dip at the junction of the three holy rivers of India, on a praticular day. Not a single important person thought it desirable to denounce this superstition. It was only when on the last day a fairly large number of deaths took place on account of the stampede and mad rush that two voices were raised in the Parliament of India the People against the superstition which had been responsible for bringing the people from various parts of the country to the scene of the tragedy, at great physical inconvenience and wasteful expenditure of money.

Why should this and many other irrational beliefs continue to sway the life of the people and do incalculable harm to them, without anybody raising his voice against their perpetuation? Swami Dayanand attended one such Kumbh fair, which was held during his life time, but he did not treat the whole thing with complacency and supreme indifference. He put up his banner of revolt at a conspicuous spot on the fair grounds and during the whole period of the fair, went on strongly denouncing the so-called efficacy of taking baths in sacred rivers, the institution of idol worship and the exploitation of the simple, ignorant people by priesthood by numerous clever methods.

It seems that Swami Dayanand followed the right path in trying to save people from the evil effects of irrational beliefs and practices. He treated the individuality of the common man with respect and wanted to help him to behave like a dignified human being in his religious and everyday life.

When the ancient Aryans began their march towards the east and the south India, they came in contact with people at various levels of culture. At first they kept aloof from them but later on they undertook the great experiment of evolving a common culture out of these heterogenous elements. Many other tribes came into India from outside in succeeding centuries. They were also assimilated into the common culture. The Aryans did not annihilate the people who bore alien or primitive cultures,—as many western people did, when they came into contact with the primitive people in new lands. Nothing was done to displace entirely their modes of worship and their various beliefs and rites ; only a wider meaning was given to them and to their gods. A common social organisation was created and a common literature was produced which spread over the whole of India in course of time. Under this impulse of toleration and mutual respect for one another, even the ignorant, primitive people were permitted to keep intact their bizarre religious practices which are continuing almost in the same form upto the present day.

But Hinduism has never accepted all religious beliefs as of equal worth. It believes in the evolution of

the idea of God and of other religious concepts. It lays upon the educated people the obligation to raise the common people to a higher cultural level. This task was not performed by the cultured section and the religious leaders during the last few centuries. They looked on with indifference at their ways of life and allowed them to follow their religious customs without making any effort to uplift them. Swami Dayanand was the first person who after many centuries tried to bring about a transformation in the religious and social life of the people of India and to present a refreshingly new conception of Hinduism to the world at large.

The negative phase seems to loom large in the teachings of Dayanand. The superstitious practices were so deeply entrenched in Hindu society that it made it necessary for him to use strong language to loosen their hold on the minds of the people. So wherever he went he denounced them in a vehement manner, held religious disputations and thereby succeeded in creating a favourable atmosphere for the reception of his positive teachings. The militant campaign was only meant to pave the way for his positive work of reinstating the real spirit of religion in the minds of the Indian people.

The religion which Dayanand placed before the people was an exceedingly simple affair. He claimed that it was the original religion of the ancient Aryans, shorn of the unwholesome additions of later times.

The central doctrine of religion, according to him, is the worship of God by means of prayer, meditation and the daily *Havana*. There is no place in this religion

for idol worship or pilgrimages and even for a priestly class.

Along with the daily prayers, Dayanand laid an equal emphasis on the purity of life, performance of noble and selfless deeds, vivid realisation of the nearness of the all-pervading power of God, and a sense of complete resignation to His will while performing the duties of one's life.

On the social side, he taught the equality and brotherhood of man and laid on all people the obligation to work incessantly for the welfare of all human beings. Religion may be said to consist in the realisation of an unseen spiritual power in all empirical phenomena and manifestations. The world is a song of the infinite Creator who pours out the joy of His Being in all the beautiful forms that we see all around us. The Unseen is present in the movements of stars, the growth of plants, the experiences of conscious beings. He is imminent in all manifestations, but He transcends them at the same time. The universe does not completely exhaust and contain within itself the infinite creative power of God or the unseen spiritual power.

To account for the world of change, Dayanand not only assumed the principle of spirit but also the principle of *prakriti*, sometimes called *maya*, as the material cause of the creation of the actual world.

The very existence of the changing world implies the bed-rock of an eternal Spiritual Being in whom the drama of everchanging existences takes place. Naturalism has never been able to explain the presence

of law and order in the universe or the fact of a certain fixed direction in the evolution of higher and higher categories, such as matter, life, mind and spirituality. In trying to dissect the body of the universe, it fails to give any satisfactory explanation of the inner urge within the universe, which keeps it moving forward. In the *Chhandogya Upanishad* this aspect has been very beautifully brought out in the dialogue between the sage Gautama and his son Swetaketu. The son wants to understand the nature of Brahman from his father, who asks him to bring a seed of an oak tree. He does as he is asked and is then told to break the seed and to report what he sees within. When the son says that he sees nothing, the father makes this fact the basis of his teaching and says that though it is not seen, there is in the seed the invisible power, on account of which the huge oak tree takes its rise out of the tiny seed. The whole universe, similarly, is the manifestation of the infinite unseen Power imbedded in the heart of the universe itself. It is something which the eye sees not, but on account of which the eye sees, the ear hears and the mind thinks. It is the source of all movements and happenings in the world—the 'prime mover' of Aristotle.

The materialist philosopher believes in material energy as the reality underlying the various manifestations, something which cannot be directly cognized, but which is assumed as the unseen cause of all that happens ; but the unseen reality of the materialist is

unconscious and blind, out of which, only by accident, this wonderful world with all its order and law comes into being. It passes one's understanding how out of a blind unconscious energy, law and order in the material world, and conscious beings later on emerge into existence. As Shri Aurobindo says, "How can any scientist know, that it was by a mere accident that life came into existence in the universe or that life elsewhere must either be exactly the same as life here, under the same conditions or not at all." It really appears very strange when it is said that life is an accident, and the whole world is an accident, a thing created by chance and governed by chance.

Faith in an eternal Supreme Being—the source of all manifestations including beauty, goodness, joy and truth—carries with it a belief in the objective existence of these higher values. They are not mere figments of human imagination but are objective in character, and as such they have been accepted and lived up to as we accept and live upto the laws of nature. Faith in God, therefore, implies faith in truth, beauty and righteousness accompanied by an aspiration to imbibe these values in one's life. A religious and God-loving man is not only to make his own life noble and beautiful ; he is also to devote himself to helping other people to live virtuous and happy lives, or in other words to establish the kingdom of God on earth.

CONCEPTION OF GOD

Swami Dayanand held that the ancient Aryans accepted the oneness of God, and that the worship of numerous gods and goddesses was introduced in later times. He strongly criticised the view of western scholars who hold that the Vedas contain prayers to the various forces of nature, which were deified as gods. The various names such as Agni, Vayu, Surya, Aditya, which occur in the Vedas, are, according to Dayanand, the different names of the same Godhead who is worshipped under these various names. This view is supported by the internal evidence in the Vedas themselves. There are many verses in the Vedas, which clearly teach the oneness of God. "They call Him Indra, Mitra, Varuna, Agni and He is the heavenly, noble-winged Gurutman (i.e., the sun). He is one, sages call Him by many names". We read in the *Yajur Veda*, "Being all-seeing, all-power all-motion in Himself, He sustains with His power the whole universe, Himself being one only". Here is a very emphatic declaration about the oneness of God.

"All glory to one who knoweth God as one without a second, called neither second, nor third, nor yet fourth is he called. He is called neither fifth nor sixth ... ... nor is he the tenth.

"He watches over creatures, those that breathe and those that breathe not. He is the sole, the one alone. In him all gods become one" (Atharva Veda, XIII. 4. 14-21).

There is not the slightest doubt, in the presence of these and many other similar verses, that the Vedic sages had attained the monotheistic point of view. They realized the principle of unity pervading all objects in the world and they gave various names to it.

Dr. Radhakrishnan expresses the same view in his "Principal Upanishads" (Page 40). "The monistic emphasis led the Vedic thinkers to look upon the Vedic deities as different names of the one universal God-head, each representing some essential power of the Divine Being .... Agni, Vayu etc. are symbols. They are not gods in themselves. They express different qualities of the object worshipped."

Why should some European scholars and even a number of Indian scholars go on repeating that the ancient Hindus were polythiestic and had not attained the concept of one God. Sri Aurobindo who strongly supports Dayanand in his view, supplies the answer. "It is because these scholars cannot give up the idea that the primitive barbarians could not possibly have risen to such high conceptions and if you allow them to have so risen, you imperil the theory of evolutionary stages of human development and you destroy the whole idea about the sense of the Vedic hymns and their place in the history of mankind." Even when they saw that in the Vedas "one deity is addressed by the names of others as well as his own, and most commonly he is given as lord and king of the

universe, attributes only appropriate to the supreme Deity," they did not accept it as a clear evidence of monotheism, but invented a new name for it and called it henotheism. Whatever the evidence, these scholars refuse to accept the view, that at a very early period the Aryans could be capable of holding such a doctrine as monotheism.

Sri Aurobindo says of Dayanand's work on the Vedas, "It is a remarkable attempt to re-establish the Vedas as a living religious scripture." "In all the basic principles," he says further, "Dayanand stands justified by the substance of the Vedas itself, by logic and reason and by our growing knowledge of the past of mankind. The Veda does hymn the one Deity of many names and powers ; it does celebrate the divine law and man's aspirations to fulfil it, it does purport to give us the law of the cosmos."

There are, however, some European scholars, who are broadminded enough to accept this point of view. For instance, Colebrook says, "The ancient Hindu religion as founded on Hindu scriptures recognized but one God."[1] Mr. Tully Scojor expresses the view in an article in the *Hibbert Journal* that "the Hindu idea is much more highly developed than that of modern Christianity" and says further that the Hindu conception regarding the self is just what the Occident needs and must appropriate

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1. Asiatic Researches, Vol. VIII.

if "it is to see through life's falsities and lay hold of its spiritual realities."

The Attributes of God. Limited and finite as we are, it is not possible for us to have an adequate conception of the Divine Spirit, the infinite power that is behind all thought and life. Yet some statement has to be made with full awareness of the fact that whatever we say is just for our satisfaction and is wholly incompetent to adequately describe the infinite source of all manifestations. There occurs a phrase in the Upanishads, "Tat Sat"; which means, it exists. At another place an attempt is made to give a more definite idea by describing the Ultimate Reality as Sat Chit Anand, i. e. possessed of the attributes of existence, consciousness and bliss, and again in another place we have a still fuller description. "He is all-pervading, brilliant, without form, invulnerable, pure, uncontaminated by evils, all-knowing, the ruler of the mind, self-existent and transcendent". Swami Dayanand adds to this description, among others, the attributes of perfection, justice, compassion, and omnipotence. Knowing as we do from experience, the gradual emergence of higher and higher forms of existence culminating in man and the further evolution of man towards holiness, perfection, goodness and love, we naturally endow the source of all existence with these qualities raised to an infinite degree.

Why should so much emphasis be placed on the presence of an unseen spiritual power in almost all religions of the world? From very ancient times, there

have been wise men, who have had glimpses of this power. When they looked at the universe and looked within themselves, they were powerfully struck by this great Presence and they set out to put what they felt, in the form of words. Arguments for the existence of God go a long way but final satisfaction comes only from intuitive realization of divinity in one's own heart, and strangely enough, when realzation comes, the lives of such persons get completely integrated, all their doubts are solved and their lives assume a serene joyful expression. The quest after God is a quest after a fuller, happier and a more satisfying way of living. A true belief in the Universal Spirit, however obtained, whether by rational thinking or by intuitive understanding, implies that the universe is rooted in justice, truth and righteousness. They are not merely man-made ideals, but are objective facts rooted in the very heart of the world itself. When I take up the cause of justice and righteousness, I get the backing of the Reality as it were, and whatever the initial obstacles, truth and justice will finally triumph over the forces of evil and untruth. "Truth is always victorious", says Swami Dayanand "and untruth is bound to be defeated. Reassured by this firm conviction, the wise should never lose heart and never desist from doing good to others and from propagating truth at all times." He was very fond of repeating a verse from Bhartrihari, which says, "whether riches come to him or pass him by, whether people praise him or speak ill of him, whether he dies today or lives up to a ripe old age, a truly wise man

would never swerve an inch from the path of truth and righteousness."

Belief in God is not simply a belief like other beliefs; it is a call for turning away from the life of a narrow self. If there is one God who is the God of all, nobody can regard himself as a privileged being. The principle of social justice is that all men are equal and have equal rights. A true devotee of God cannot lead a life of egoistic self seeking.

Ultimately spiritual transformation depends upon getting rid of egoism and denying the lower narrow self which divides man from man. According to *Yoga Darshan*, egoism or the sense of 'I' and 'mine' is the result of the mistaken identity of Purusha who is pure consciousness with the Antahkarana—our constantly changing mental processes. If we once realize our true self, we shall get out of egoism and out of the sorrow and suffering and vanity of life.

When we surrender ourselves to God even for brief moments, we take a plunge as it were into the universal life and get emancipated from the prison of egoism. The more we free ourselves from narrow selfishness, the more godly and religious we become.

Incarnation of God. God is pure Universal Spirit, the infinite ocean of perfection surrounding us on all sides. Later-day Hinduism got the belief that the infinite takes on a human form, when the need arises. But as Mahatma Gandhi says in his commentary on the *Gita*, "The inscrutable providence and the unique power of the Lord is ever at work. This in fact is Avatara or

incarnation. Strictly speaking there can be no birth for God."

God has no form. All objects with forms are limited and finite, and can occupy only a limited portion of space and time. According to Swami Dayanand, the assumption that the infinite, all-pervading and eternal Lord of the universe can take on a human form, is the height of illogical thinking. The theory of divine incarnation comes in for severe criticism at his hands. It limits the perfection of God. To equate Him with a finite human being, however noble and powerful he may be, is to have a very poor conception of the infinite greatness of God.

It is sometimes said that on account of his omnipotence, God can easily incarnate himself into a human form. Swami Dayanand makes some interesting observations on the attribute of omnipotence. "The word omnipotence means that God does not require anybody's assistance in the work of the creation, sustenance and destruction of the world and in determining the merits and demerits of individual souls. He performs all his work with his infinite might and power." He says further that it would lead to strange conclusions if the word omnipotence were to be interpreted as meaning the power to do each and every thing. One may well ask if God can do evil or destroy himself, create another God like himself or engage in self-contradictory activities. There can be no greater self-contradiction than to imagine that God the infinite, all-pervading and all-knowing power can take on a finite and limited form and lose His attribute of omniscience.

Nor does Swami Dayanand believe in divine miracles, which are mentioned in almost all religions of the world including the later-day Hinduism. God is the great law—giver and His laws work universally. No man, not even a holy man or a prophet, can break any of these laws and perform so-called miracles. Most of the so-called miracles are mere made-up stories to raise a particular person in the estimation of his followers, or a particular event might have been called miracle because the people did not understand the law of its working. To ignorant people the various scientific inventions or strange happenings are so many miracles.

RELIGIOUS WORSHIP

Religion is not simply belief. It is an attempt at realization of the Ultimate Reality, to get into harmony or at-one-ment with it. Naturally meditation and worship are a most important part of religion ; in fact, they constitute its essence. It is through worship that a person gets the experience of intimate relation or union with the mysterious power of God, from where he derives his life, strength and wisdom, in fact, his very existence as a human being.

Swami Dayanand laid a great emphasis upon the daily need of worship. He says in the *Satyarth Prakash*, "Just as a man trembling with cold gets immediate relief by going near the fire, similarly, the individual can get rid of all sufferings by his nearness to God, and thereby acquire divine attributes. It is, therefore, highly desirable that one should daily perform

acts of worship in the form of contemplation, prayer and meditation. They will have their own effects, and at the same time the individual will get such an accession of strength that he would never falter or lose heart even when he is face to face with suffering as great as a mountain."

We become what we think of every day. Our thoughts are forces, which gradually but inevitably bring about a change in character and life. If we contemplate the attributes of God (Stuti), express a deep yearning for a divine life (Prarthana) and practice meditation (Upasana) with unfailing regularity every day, our life should undergo the wished-for transformation.

It need not be re-emphasized that Dayanand was against the practice of idol worship. He felt so intensely about it, that wherever he went he made it a point to give discourses on the uselessness of idol worship, and held a number of Shastrarths or public discussions on this subject. It is now universally accepted that the ancient Aryans did not resort to the worship of idols and that there is no sanction for it in the Vedas. It is not an Aryan mode of worship. Dayanand does not accept the contention that an idol helps the concentration of mind. It is, on the other hand, a source of distraction. It does not seem right to think that a finite image can bring the idea of the infinite God in the mind of the worshipper.

It is interesting to note that even the religious literature of later-day Hinduism has given the lowest status to worship through the agency of idols.

The following translation of a Sanskrit quotation given by Dr. Radhakrishnan is very enlightening. "The worshippers of the absolute are the highest in rank; second to them are worshippers of personal God, then come the worshippers of the incarnations like Rama, Krishna, etc., below them are those who worship ancestors, deities and sages, and lowest of all are the worshippers of petty forces and spirits." It is needless to say that the worship of the last three categories of devotional objects is all done by means of idols.

It is really strange that a mode of worship which is recognised as the lowest, meant only for persons of low understanding, should have become almost universal in Hindu society, and no effort should have been made to turn men's minds to higher modes of worship. Swami Dayanand was most probably the first great reformer in modern times, who denounced this method of divine worship in such strong terms.

Prayer and meditation are, therefore, the best means of divine worship. A life of prayer implies a spirit of yearning towards God,—the source of all goodness, beauty and strength,—and a readiness to render to him complete obedience, faith and devotion. Prayer, as James says is 'religion in act', a vital means of putting oneself in union with God. We can of course, pray to God for all good things of life, but our chief ambition should be to attain to the holiness of God. The following prayer from one of the Christian saints very clearly expresses the spirit of trust and humility which should underly our acts of prayer.

"Lord, I know not what to ask of thee. Thou only knowest what I need. Father! give to thy child that which he himself knows not how to ask. I am silent; I offer myself in a sacrifice; I yield myself to thee. I would have no other desire but to accomplish thy will."

Meditation or Upasana generally means constant repetition of a small formula in the form of a short verse or even the sacred syllable "OM" or any other syllable with perfect concentration of mind. Before doing that the mind is to be emptied of all ideas and a state of ease and relaxation to be induced in oneself.

Swami Dayanand prepared a Sandhya or a collection of Vedic verses for daily worship. There verses fulfil all the needs of contemplation, prayer and me ditation. But the pity is that very few people try to have a complete understanding of the meaning of these verses. Mere parrot-like repetition, according to Dayanand, without the knowledge of their significance is a futile activity and a mere waste of time. It is a burden to the soul and does no good whatsoever. The meaning of each mantra is to be thoroughly grasped and we are to re-peat these mantras with concentration and depth of emotion. People as a rule do not do things in the right way and then complain that the practice of religion is not doing any good to them.

It is not enough that the verses of Sandhya should be recited. In the third chapter of the *Satyarth Prakash*, Swamiji strongly urges that parents should make it a point to teach their children the method

of doing Pranayama and speaks highly of the good effects of the Pranayama exercises. He says that Pranayama brightens the intellect and, as a result, one can easily grasp even the most abstruse and difficult subjects. Pranayama increases one's physical and mental vigour and enables the devotee to live a pure and chaste life without any difficulty. Shri Aurobindo makes the following comments on Pranayama on the basis of his own experience. "It is my experience that Pranayama makes one's intellect sharper and one's brain quicker". He goes on to say, "my memory was rather dull before Pranayama, but afterwards I composed whenever I had inspiration and remembered *ad seriatum* the whole, till I committed it all to paper at my leisure. I felt as if my brain was encircled by a ring of electricity." But it happens only when one has carried on the practice for a fairly long time. This is what Aurobindo did during the early days of his Sadhana. But even a little of Pranayama done regularly each day does a lot of good. *It must, however, be well kept in mind that it should not be undertaken on one's own account but one should always learn it from a competent teacher.* Sometimes people begin to practice Pranayama after having read about it in some book. This is a mistake and it is likely to do more harm than good.

Swamiji insists that Pranayama should be made a daily part of our religious devotions. The Sandhya cannot be regarded as complete unless it is accompanied by Pranayama. The full spiritual benefit can be reaped only when all elements are harmoniously woven together.

The singing of one or two devotional songs should also be made a part of our daily devotions and there should be meditation or Jap of 'Om' or the Gayatri mantra for some time at the end. In doing these religious exercises one should not be in a hurry and one should also get oneself into a religious mood in the beginning. One has to be completely sincere and free from all worldly attachments, when one is performing the daily acts of worship. According to Swami Dayanand, one should spend at least one hour in religious devotions.

I think, the account of the method of worship taught by Dayanand would not be complete if no mention is made of Agnihotra. He says that Agnihotra should also be performed along with the chanting of prayers and the practice of meditation. The daily Agnihotra should not take more than fifteen minutes. Dayanand in the *Satyarth Prakash* puts emphasis on the physical effects of Havan. It purifies the air and promotes healthful living for all members of one's family and for one's neighbours as well. But the spiritual benefit of Havan lies in the meaningful recitation of the mantras when performing the Havan. Havan may be regarded as a concrete act of our dedication to the common good of humanity. After each 'Ahuti' the expression "Idam na mam" has to be uttered which means "It is not for me, it is for thee, O Lord". According to Vedic culture, the whole life of man is a continuous act of sacrifice. Even when a man eats, he is supposed to do so, so that he could play his part in the life of the whole.

This was the underlying conception of the symbolic act of Havan or Dev Yajna. Apart from the daily performance of Dev Yajna, Swami Dayanand lays great emphasis on seeking the company of pious and spiritually minded persons, so that one could get inspiration from their spiritual talks. As the daily company of sages and religious teachers may not be available to every one, it entails upon each one the necessity of Swadhyaya or the daily reading of religious scriptures. A daily thoughtful study of well-known religious literature such as Vedic verses, Upanishads, Gita, etc., is only next in importance to personal contacts with spiritually advanced individuals, and should be done every day. Swadhyaya is also regarded as a Yajna and is called Brahma Yajna. In actual practice, Agnihotra has mostly gone out of vogue among the members of the Arya Samaj. Religious worship in the form of prayer and meditation (Sandhya) has generally taken its place.

We have referred above to Dev Yajna and Brahma Yajna. They are two out of the five daily Yajnas, the performance of which is held obligatory on the part of the Aryan householders. These Yajnas represent the ancient conception of daily duties to be performed by a persen. In Manu (IV. 21) it has been positively stated that a man, as far as it lies in his power, should not neglect the performance of these five Yajnas.

Apart from the Dev Yajna and Brahma Yajna mentioned above, the other three Yajnas are:

I. *Pitri Yajna.* In orthodox Hinduism Pitri Yajna consists in offering oblations to the dead ancestors, and the performance of periodic shraddha and tarpana. Swami Dayanand calls it a superstition, and enjoins upon the householders the duty of looking after the comfort and daily needs of living parents and other elderly members of the house. This is Pitri Yajna in the real sense. In India and China, parents are held in great veneration from very ancient times. It would be a pity if this deep-rooted filial sentiment is weakened as a consequence of the impact of Western ideas. A person sees the light of day because of the parents, and it is the parents who look after him during the long period of dependenee through which a child has to pass, and make him capable, through education and training, of leading a comfortable and civilized existence. Showing proper respect to them and solicitude for their welfare and comfort is a pious duty for a householder to fulfil.

II. *Nri-Yajna* or *Atithi Yajna*, It means hospitality to a guest. It also means the duty of rendering service to our fellowmen. Hospitality was regarded in ancient times as one of the foremost duties of a householder, and it was looked upon as sinful if one took his food before feeding one's guests, or if one did not attend to the wants of those who sought one's help and protection or stood in need of them.

III. *Bhuta Yajna*, It meant the duty of showing kindliness to lower animals. A householder should not

cause any pain to the dumb creatures, and should try to be kind to them as far as possible.

In the case of most Hindus, these Yajnas have lost all meaning as important duties of life, and have taken the form of mere meaningless rituals. Daily worship, regular study of scriptures, unfailing service to one's parents and elders, a readiness to serve one's fellowmen, and humane treatment of animals are the five great obligations of one's daily life, whose importance cannot be over-rated.

Swami Dayanand also recommends the performance of a number of sacraments or sanskaras at different periods of life. The most important sacraments, which are generally performed by most of the followers of Swami Dayanand, are the Jat Veda (birth ceremony); Namakarana (giving a name); the Mundan (first shaving of hair); Yajnopavita (putting on of sacred thread when commencing education); Vivah (marriage ceremony) and Antyeshti sanskara (or the ceremony connected with death). These are important sanskaras and in each case, Havan Yajna is performed to the accompaniment of the recitation of a much larger number of vedic verses of varied nature, according to the kind of sacrament which is to be performed.

Leaving the sanskaras, which have both a social and religious significance, and are to be performed at intervals, what has been said above constitutes the system of worship which Swami Dayanand would have us follow everyday. In the 9th chapter of the *Satyarth Prakash*, when describing the means leading to

salvation he equates stuti, prarthana and upasana with yogabhyas or the practice of Yoga. This becomes obvious if we keep before our mind the complete idea of religious worship as enjoined by him, namely, the exercise of daily Pranayama to be followed by contemplation, prayer and meditation. Of course, there is a difference of degree between the level of attainment of an ordinary person and that of a great yogi. The latter acquires great and marvellous power of concentration ultimately leading to a state of Samadhi, or the condition of higher cosmic consciousness.

We would like to add here the following lines from Behenon's book on yoga, based on his personal experience, of the effects of yoga practices carried on for a year or so in an ashram at Lonavala in Bombay. "A few months after beginning the practices, a distinct change was noticeable in my health. No work, physical or mental, could tire me so rapidly as it did before. This phase may be summarized as an increase in my resistance capacity or power of endurance.

"I cannot refrain from putting on record a change in my own emotional life, which seems somehow to be an outgrowth of these practices. They have led to an emotional stability and balance, which I do not remember having possessed before...... I have had the privilege of watching at close range the daily lives of more than half a dozen yogis for over a period of one year. I can testify without any reservation that they were the happiest personalities that I have ever known. Their serenity was contagious and in their presence I have

always felt that I am dealing with people who hold great power in reserve. Whatever may be one's opinion of the yogic theory of the mind and its evolution, its success in developing a healthy emotional equilibrium is empirically verifiable."

There is not the slightest doubt that yogic practices are a great help in the process of mind-transformation, but they are only a part of religious sadhana. They should be invariably accompanied by disinterested performance of one's daily duties, of the cultivation of a pure, loving and compassionate heart, a spirit of detachment from the effects of daily activities, and complete resignation and surrender to the Divine will. For this a deep and continuous reflection on spiritual truth, constantly seeking the company of holy men and whole-hearted daily worship of God are essential. In the language of the yoga of knowledge, they are known as the processes of shravana, manana and nididhyasana, or study of scriptures, reflection on them and meditation. If one continues with this programme of spiritual effort without any interruption, one may some day find in oneself the awakening of a higher state of consciousness, a state of deliverance from the lower narrow self.

TRANSMIGRATION OF SOUL

According to Swami Dayanand, moksha or salvation consists in the complete cessation of suffering in all its forms. But the attainment of moksha or a state of perfection is not an easy process, and one may have to

pass through a number of births, before one reaches the final goal of life.

Swami Dayanand believes in the doctrine of transmigration of soul. It is a common belief with the Hindus. That the death of the body does not mean the end of the soul is a belief held by the followers of many other religions such as Christianity and Islam, besides Hinduism. But the main difference between Christianity and Islam on the one hand and Hinduism on the other is that while the latter holds that each soul passes through a succession of births till it has qualified itself for emancipation from the cycle of births and deaths, the former religions believe that each soul appears only once in the world and after death it remains in a state of quiescence, as it were, till it is revived on the day of judgment, when its good and bad deeds performed during its life in the world are judged by God, and on the basis of that judgment it is sent either to heaven or to hell, where it remains for ever. To a Hindu this view does not make any appeal. In the first place, one life-time is too short a period for a person to attain perfection. Secondly, it does not appear very rational that a person after death should remain quiescent and dormant for millions and millions of years before it is summoned for final judgment.

The doctrine of transmigration goes along with the law of Karma which is an application of the universal law of causation in the domain of mind and consciousness. Human beings, however, are not absolutely and

fatalistically determined in their lives by their previous karmas. Of course, we determine our own fate through our actions. What we have sown, we shall have to reap in this life or the next. But it is important to note the fact that while we are reaping the fruits of our past actions, we are also at the same time, by the exercise of our freedom of choice, creating our fate for the future. Our will and effort do play an important part in determining our future. The law of karma, therefore, is not a doctrine of fatalism as some western writers would have us believe. The achievement of spiritual perfection can even destroy the latent effects of previous karmas, i.e., those effects which have not yet begun to operate or manifest themselves in actual life.

It may be objected to the law of karma that it does not give a satisfactory account of how inequalities appeared right in the beginning. As a matter of fact, no science has ever succeeded or even tried to explain the beginnings of events. We do not yet know how the cosmic process began, yet physics, biology and other natural sciences do not hesitate to explain every event with reference to its immediate cause. This is what the law of karma also does with reference to the conditions of life, which accompany each individual on his birth.

The doctrine of transmigration explains, in a more or less satisfactory manner, the existence of inequalities amongst living beings. Each one gets in the next birth what he deserves, as the result of his karma or

actions in the present life. "The doctrine of transmigration can explain why millions of people are born diseased, poor and wretched, why one person is born talented and beautiful and another half witted and so on" (Romau Landou). Mackneile Dixon goes so far as to say in his charming and popular Gifford lectures entitled "The Human Situation", that unless one believed in metampsychosis, the human life would lose all significance and become altogether meaningless. A large number of eminent thinkers of the west have found a great solace and intellectual satisfaction in this doctrine. Pythogoras, Plato, Schaupenhaeur, Mc-Taggart are some of the world famous thinkers who believed in the transmigration of soul.

The doctrine of transmigration of soul ensures that each individual will sooner or later attain to salvation. It is a doctrine of hope and optimism. While some persons are on the last rung of the ladder and their desire to get on to the roof is about to be fulfilled, others are at the bottom of the ladder or in the middle or at some other part of it ; but all must, sooner or later, reach the final goal of liberation.

THE NATURE OF SALVATION

What is this state of liberation or salvation ? It can only be described in a vague manner as a state of bliss, a state of complete absence of suffering, and of perpetual union with God. It is true immortality. In the words of Swami Dayanand, salvation means "the emancipation of the soul from pain and suffering of every description, and a subsequent career of freedom in the all-pervading

God and his immense creation for a fixed period of time and its resumption of earthly life after the expiry of that period." It consists in outliving or outgrowing the limitations of the life of the ego, but it does not mean, according to Dayanand, the annihilation of the individual soul. Sankara regarded moksha to consist in the total absorption of soul into the life of the Absolute, just as a piece of salt dissolves in water or a wave is merged again into the ocean out of which it arose for the time being.

Many idealistic writers in the west, as for instance Bradley and Bosanquet, believe only in the conservation of values while the persons, who realise these values in their life time completely lose their identity in the Absolute. The valuable elements of the lives of individual persons are saved while the individuals themselves are sacrificed at the altar of the Ultimate Reality. Their final destiny is to be completly transmuted in the Absolute Being. "In the Absolute" says Bradley "the individual attains the complete gift and dissipation of his personality."

Swami Dayanand does not believe in the disappearance of the finite soul in the infinite God. The infinite implies the finite and has no meaning apart from it. According to him, therefore, not only the values but the selves also are immortalized on the attainment of the state of salvation. The soul does not make all the efforts to attain salvation during many a life-time, only just to be annihilated and

absorbed into the infinite. It would not be salvation but extinction of the soul.

Swami Dayanand, however, does not accept the position that salvation once attained lasts for ever and for ever. The state of salvation lasts for an immeasurably long period, but ultimately the soul has to come back in the world and take up its work again. The view of Dayanand in this respect differs from that of many Indian thinkers who believe in the permanent nature of the state of deliverance. The chief argument which Dayanand advances in support of his position is that the efforts of a finite soul being of a finite and limited nature, the effect cannot be unlimited and infinite.

The idea that a soul after emancipation should always remain in a state of blissful inactivity, taking no part in the eternal world-process, does not appeal to energetic minds. Periodic rest would be welcome ; but perpetual holidaying might almost produce a mood of revolt in people of dynamic temperament. It, however, stands to reason that the liberated souls after their return to active participation in world affairs do not altogether lose the effects of their noble and disinterested actions, the wealth of devotion earned by them before the attainment of deliverance. These returned souls may be supposed to be full of love and devotion and to spend their time in doing acts of disinterested service and leading pure lives dedicated to spiritual ends. Here it would be apposite to refer to the conception of Bodhisattva evolved in later-day Mahayana Buddhism.

Bodhisattva is a noble soul, who has achieved

enlightenment and is entitled to enter into the state of Nirvana, but he stops at the door of Nirvana and refuses to step in. His heart is full of compassion for the suffering humanity and he makes up his mind to dedicate himself from birth to birth relieving their misery and distress, and postpone the idea of entering the happy state of Nirvana till the entire human race is redeemed.

The idea propounded by Swami Dayanand is more or less of a similar nature with the difference that the emancipated soul enjoys a period of restful existence in Divine union and then returns to the world to carry on its work of disinterested service to mankind.

It may be objected that, if this process continues cycle after cycle, a time may come when all the souls would reach a very high level of spiritual attainment, and no souls would be left to carry on the ordinary functions of the world. This difficulty can be met on the hypothesis of an infinite number of souls. We have the idea of an infinity of numbers in mathematics. It is not possible to put any limit to the number of souls. If you stop at any number you cannot prevent the mind from conceiving a still larger number, and this process can go on up to infinity. We are surrounded by infinity on all sides, and therefore, the idea of an infinite number of souls makes equal sense with the idea of infinity of points in space or time.

Heaven and Hell. It may be worthwhile in the end to give the view of Swami Dayanand about heaven and hell: Heaven and hell, according to him are states of mind and not any fixed abodes located in space for the

reception of souls of good and bad persons after their death. "Swarga (Heaven) is the enjoyment of extreme happiness ... Naraka is another name for undergoing extreme suffering." It is the belief of Islam and Christianity and of later-day Hinduism also, that there are specialized regions, in ethereal space, known as heaven and hell. Heaven is described as a region where there is nothing but bliss and all sorts of joys, and to which those persons go after death, who have spent their earthly life doing noble deeds and in living lives of compassion and disinterested service. On the other hand, a very horrible picture is painted of hell to which are consigned the souls of those persons who have led wicked lives on the earth.

These conceptions may have played some part in keeping people on the right track in semi-civilized times, but now that we know enough as the result of the increase in scientific knowledge about the distribution of stars and their planets in astronomical space, these ideas of heaven and hell appear as mere childish conceptions, the outcome of primitive and unscientific imagination of the human race.

CHAPTER III

Metaphysical and Ethical Views

The metaphysical views of Dayanand are based on a realistic Epistemology. We can aquire the knowledge of reality by the proper use of our apparatus of knowing such as the senses and the mind. The knowledge which science gives us by the right use of the apparatus is real and objective, even though it is a knowledge of phenomena. It is of course true, that our knowledge obtained through these sources does not cover the whole reality ; but it is real as far as it goes. Whatever is presented to consciousness in the form of sense perception or objects of thought, is objectively existent.

Practically all systems of Hindu thought accept sense experience and inference as valid sources of right knowledge. It was after Shankaracharya that senses lost their prestige, in the eyes of many thinkers and even among the common people, as source of right knowledge. Not only common sense perception but even well-established scientific knowledge were deceptive in nature, in the view of Shanker's followers.

The sense organs sometimes deceive us with illusory experiences. If we immerse a strick into water, it appears

broken at the suface. Our sense organs are subject to various defects. There are, however, well-known and reliable criteria for distinguishing error from truth. The errors of one sense are corrected by another, and the errors of all of them are corrected by reasoned thinking.

The whole universe is a manifestation of the Divine. When we study the laws of phenomena we, so to speak, study the ways of God himself, however limited our knowledge in this respect may be. The *Vaisesika Darshan* regards the study of the six *padarthas* and the various physical manifestations as a means of achieving Moksha or spiritual enlightenment. Swami Dayanand had a great fondness for the philosophy of Kanada, and virtually believed that the knowledge of empirical manifestations is a very great help in attaining the knowledge of Ultimate Reality. So great was his faith in this approach, that when anybody expressed a desire to read philosophy under his guidance, he almost always recommended the study of *Vaisesika Darshan* as a preliminary course.

RELATION OF THE VARIOUS DARSHANS TO ONE ANOTHER

The view of Dayanand as regards the relation of the various orthodox schools of philosophy to one another differs from that of many commentators. According to him, the six darshans are complementary to one another. Each presents a particular view or darshan of reality. We get a more or less complete and gradually deepening view of reality, as we go from one darshan to another.

The Nyaya-Vaisheshika system gives us a common, sense view of reality by means of the catagories of substance, quality, motion, etc. This is the empirical view of things. It accepts the elements, the minds and souls as eternal and God as the omniscient and eternally existing power which sets the universe going and sustains it, as long as it lasts, before lapsing into a state of quiescence again. The *Sankhya Darshan* goes deeper and reduces all elements, space as well as minds to Prakriti with its threefold gunas. Besides matter, it also regards souls an real entities. According to Sankhya, these two categories are sufficient to account for the evolution of the world. The *Yoga Darshan* adds the concept of Ishwara to account for the original push, which brings the world into manifestation from its previous stage of equilibrium.

In Sankhya-yoga system, the three catagories, matter, souls and God, remain for the most part juxtaposed without any internal principle of unity. In *Vedanta Darshan*, matter, souls and God are integrated into an organic whole, and a unified conception is brought before our view. We thus find progressively an increase in the depth of insight into the nature of things.

The importance of Mimansa Shastra for philosophy lies in its fuller exposition of *Pramanas* or ways of knowing than that found in any other system. They are accepted by *Vedanta Darshan* almost in their entirety.

THE NATURE OF REALITY

The realistic and empirical approach to the study

of metaphysical problems led Swami Dayanand to the pluralistic conclusion, namely that there are three ultimate and irreducible principles of the universe,—matter, souls and God, and that, Reality is an organic whole of these three eternal substances.

The first thing that experience presents us with is an assemblage of physical objects which ultimately can be reduced to a few basic elements. The theoretical conception of the elements has been subjected to a further resolving process in the 20th century, so that they are no longer regarded as ultimate ; but are looked upon as differentiations of a primitive original stuff, variously designated as energy or electricity. The *Nyaya Vaihcsika* system analysed the physical existents into a number of elements and stopped there. The Sankhya carried the analysis further and arrived at the notion of Prakriti with its three gunas (aspects) as the ultimate basis of physical reality.

When we speak of matter or Prakriti as a fundamental category which explains the appearance of physical objects, it is not meant that the nature of the matter is known, or that it can be perceived by means of our sense organs. The things which we perceive are the resultants of various factors and at the present stage of our knowledge we may not be able to discriminate the physical object as it is, apart from the influence of other factors. Sense data, as they are actually experienced by us. are dependent for thelr existence, amongst other things, upon a brain, nerves, sense organ, the transmitting media and the external stimuli. What the

external stimuli or the external sources of our sensations are, in their original nature, we may not be able to say beyond making a bare statement that they are some form or pattern of Prakriti or matter. Matter or Prakriti is not a direct object of our cognition. What we are directly aware of are its various manifestations, which appear at certain points of time and then disappear, giving place to other manifestations, and thus the cycle of the physical changes goes on in an uninterrupted manner. That physical objects are present at various places is assured to us from the converging evidence of different senses and the mutual agreement of different perceptions. The sense knowledge which we get from external objects may be regarded as the language in which the original stimuli are translated for us. The sensations are the symbols or substitutes of the original stimuli. Just as a currency note is, for all practical purposes, equivalent to the money, the amount of which it bears on its face, the sense perceptions may similarly be looked upon as tokens or substitutes for the original stimuli.

The assertion that an event or an object, as it is known, is the outcome of a large number of factors, is quite different from the statement that the object is unreal, illusory or mind-dependent. Swami Dayanand strongly criticizes the views of Shankaracharya and the Yogachara School of Buddhism, in as much as the former regards the material world as an illusion, a mere super-imposition upon the reality of Brahman and the latter looks upon the external perceptions as

subjective ideas, generated in the minds of individuals on the basis of their *Sanskaras*. The objects of the world are of an ephemeral and evanascent character but they are not unreal on that account. The Upanishads, from which Shankaracharya derives his philosophy, nowhere speak of the world as a mere illusion. In fact, the word Maya, occurs only in the *Svetasvatara Upanishad*, where it is used in the sense of Prakriti or the material cause of the world. In the tenth verse of the fourth chapter of this Upanishad, it is said :—

"The material cause should be known as maya and the supreme God should be known as the controller or supporter of maya." In other Upanishads, we read of the world as being reabsorbed into Brahman, but we never come across the view which has been foisted upon the Upanishads by Shankar ; namely that the world is only seemingly real, like the illusion of a snake in the rope, and vanishes, without a residue, on the dawn of true knowledge.

In the history of Western philosophy, the subjective idealism of Berkeley bears a resemblance to the Buddhistic school to which we have referred above. Berkeley tried to show that a physical object is nothing but an assemblage of ideas which cannot exist apart from their being perceived by a mind. Ideas naturally cannot be supposed to exist except in a mind and the mind which holds the collective ideas that go by the name of the material world was believed by Berkeley to be the Universal mind of God. From this point of view there is no such thing as material substance. Matter is only

a figment of imagination, a hypothetical entity having no existence whatsoever. Needless to say, subjective idealism cannot sustain itself. Ideas, if they are to have any meaning, presuppose objects to which they can refer and from which they are derived. A little reflection would convince anybody of the secondary nature of ideas and sensations which always hark back to some sort of physical substrata as their stimuli.

It is now-a-days almost becoming a fashion amongst a large number of philosophers of different schools of thought to belittle the category of substance. Properties and attributes, events and processes are all that can be observed. We have no means of knowing whether there is any substance beneath these properties. Modern science also, in some of its representatives, looks askance at the notion of substance. It is, however, one thing to say that we cannot directly observe substance and quite a different thing to deny its existence altogether. In this connection, the following remarks of Prof. Drake are very significant, "There are those, who decry the category of substance as meaningless, since physics cannot tell us what it is. But most of us will continue to feel that if certain parts of space are occupied, there must be something which occupies it ; if there is motion, there must be something that moves...... But we can only speculate, its inner nature remains private."

According to Swami Dayanand, matter or energy (you may give it any name) is a basic category, which the analysis of experience brings home to us and which cannot be transformed into a different category.

Thus matter is one of the ultimates of experience and it cannot be further reduced into anything immaterial. Even some followers of Shankaracharya, for instance, Padmapada and Prakashananda interpret Maya to mean the material cause of the world, analogous to the conception of Prakriti in the Sankhya Philosophy.

Physical objects, however, are not the only existents which we meet within our experience. There are also living and conscious individuals in the world that have also to be accounted for. A part of an individual can be explained as the outcome of physical and chemical forces, but the whole cannot be thus accounted for. Life and consciousness are principles which defy any effort to assimilate them to physical phenomena. There was a time in the history of Western materialism, especially after the discovery of Darwin's law of evolution, when high hopes were entertained of the possibility of importing materialistic explanation into the domain of life and consciousness. The persistent efforts for so many decades, of biologists and physiologists alike have to a large extent shown the futility of these hopes. In spite of the brilliant work of a large number of biologists, it has not been found passible to explain biological phenomena such as fertilization, heredity etc., on mechanistic principles.

If life presents so many difficulties, consciousness is a still harder nut to crack on the basis of materialistic hypothesis. The earlier materialists of whom some French thinkers of the eighteenth century are the

prototypes, spoke of consciousness as the function of the brain. As the liver secretes bile, the brain was supposed to secrete thought. This way of looking at things could not hold the field for long as it was felt that physical causes give birth to physical effects, and consciousness, being fundamentally different from a material manifestation, cannot be explained as being generated by the physical functioning of the brain. Huxley was honest enough to admit that materialism could not offer a satisfactory explanation of consciousness. But even Huxley was not prepared to give it any prominent place in the living organism. He referred to consciousness as an "epiphenomenon," a useless accompaniment of the action of the brain and nerves like heat in a lamp, having no causal agency whatsoever in the guidance of animal behaviour.

Views like the above have often appeared in the past in the history of philosophical thought but being altogether unsatisfactory as an explanation of consciousness, they have died a natural death, so that not many people, practically speaking, take any notice of them in these times.

Materialism has, however, assumed another form in modern times and it goes by the name of 'emergent evolution.' Briefly, it assumes that matter, life and mind are different levels of the evolution of the same primordial stuff. There was no mind in the beginning of evolution. It appeared later on, and if we are to believe Alexander, the protagonist of this view, Deity or God is to come last of all as the final achievement

of evolution. There is no limit to metaphysical vagaries and here we have a typical instance of such a vagary, which makes the popularly accepted scheme of things topsy-turvy by putting God at the end instead of at the beginning of creation. The theory of emergent evolution concedes that life has its own characteristic features, and so has consciousness, and neither of these can be explained as a mere transformation of the original physical stuff. At the end of each level a new quality appears, which cannot be explained on the basis of the old level. It is virtually a 'new' and unresolvable quality but it has come out of the old. It had no existence before its emergence. Thus life appeared after a certain level of material organisation had been reached, and mind appeared after the quality of life had taken roots in the soil of matter.

If we look carefully into the theory, it will be found to be the same old doctrine of materialism masquerading as a new theory. If we take the theory at its face value and concede its main thesis that the primordial stuff, in its initial stages, was altogether devoid of the least vestiges of life or consciousness, the appearance of life or consciousness later on, without any antecedent ground for such appearance, would strike one as a great miracle which has taken place without any rhyme or reason. From this point of view, anything can take its rise from anything and any effect can appear from any cause. Empirically, the position appears very unconvincing if not altogether absurd. If, on the other hand, the theory were interpreted to mean that matter, life and consciousness

were already contained in a germinal form in the primitive state of being, and came into manifestation in a certain order of sequence, the theory would no longer remain materialistic and, in this form, would provide a greater metaphysical satisfaction.

It is sometimes said that consciousness is always found in close alliance with the physical body, and any serious disturbance in the latter brings about, in most cases, a cessation of conscious processes. In this connection, I cannot do better than quote the following from an article, which appeared in one of the issues of "Philosophy" some years ago.

"Consciousness or mind may very well be considered a scientific psychological postulate. It is no more mysterious or magical than the concept of ether or electricity. As in the case of electricity, its nature or essence is an enigma to us, but the effects of its operation are everywhere discernible and measurable within limits...... In radio, for example, a number of elements or factors are essential to the enjoyment of a programme, a sounding instrument, a receiving apparatus, a medium between the two stations, an auditory organ, a nervous system, consciousness, and a subtle mysterious electric wave, about whose real nature we know nothing. For the appreciation of a radio programme, all the above mentioned factors must be present and intact. Any break in the series such as a broken wire, a defective tube, a defective ear, may render a radio programme impossible. So by analogy the mind may represent a mysterious energy—no more mysterious than electricity,

but to have it appear and function as hearing, seeing, thinking, there is required the medium of nerves, sense organs, physical stimuli etc."

There is a growing volume of opinion in the West that life and consciousness cannot take their stand upon mechanist principles alone. It is being realised that the basic categories of life and consciousness will have to be accepted along with that of matter if the vital and psychical phenomena are to be satisfactorily explained.

Swami Dayanand does not recognise any fundamental difference between life and consciousness. To him both life and consciousness are the manifestations of soul substance at different levels of evolution. The principle of soul has to be accepted as immanent in plant life and animal life, otherwise it would not be possible to differentiate the vital and mental phenomena from purely physical phenomena.

The Indian schools of Nyaya, Vaisesika, Samkhya and Yoga philosophies unequivocally accept the basic difference between material and psychical categories, and so does the Vedantic school of thought. In the face of Shankar's interpretation, it may be worthwhile to refer to some sutras from the Vedanta sutras to show that the latter does accept the fundamental nature of the soul or individual Jiva. In a number of sutras, the individual soul is described as of a minute size. Naturally this cannot refer to Brahman, who is infinite and omnipresent. In sutra II. 1.22, the Brahman is spoken of as Adhika, that is, different from the soul. Similarly in sutras I. 3.16 and some other

sutras also, the word 'itara' (the other one) appears as clearly used to refer to the individual soul as distinguished from God. There is no mention anywhere, that the distinction between Jiva and Brahman, as is shown in these passages, in unreal, and born out of ignorance. Swami Dayanand seems to be on firm ground when he declares that all the ancient orthodox philosophical systems, when properly interpret, accept the pluralistic character of the Ultimate Reality.

The fact of consciousness or psychical principle having been accepted as an ultimate category, the question naturally arises whether there is a unitary stream of consciousness which is split up into fragments or there are many psychical centres, as indicated by the presence of innumerable conscious and living beings in the world, Swami Dayanand's opinion is definitely in favour of the doctrine of the multiplicity of souls and that is the view of the orthodox Indian philosophical systems as well. The Sankhya yoga philosophy, to refer to only one of them, clearly speaks of the manyness of *purushas* or souls and advances a number of arguments to establish the validity of this view. To Dayanand, the evidence of experience which presents a large number of separate conscious individuals, points conclusively to the inherent multiplicity of individual souls. Every soul continues to figure in the cycle of births and deaths till on the complete attainment of discrimination (Viveka) and non-attachment (Vairagya) it obtains a state of perfect bliss and happiness: These

are common ideas of Indian philosophy and Dayanand fully subscribes to them.

So far we have discussed the basic categories of matter and consciousness. The world, however, as it appears to us, with its incessant change and never-ending panorama of events and happenings, requires a further category to be completely accounted for. Matter and souls left to themselves with their limited resources would not be able to evolve cosmos and order out of the original chaotic stuff. We know, though not completely, what the properties of matter are and we also know more or less how the conscious selves behave, and from what we know of them, we cannot lend ourselves to the belief that matter alone or combined with souls or *purushas* could bring into existence this wonderful world. It is therefore quite natural that nearly everywhere, in almost all civilized races, the idea of a Supreme being as the sustaining power behind the changing phenomena of the world should, sooner or later, make its appearance and take deep root in course of time. In India the belief in a Supreme being who is one, and the source of all manifestations, is found like a veritable spring of life enriching its culture and giving it a distinctive spiritual flavour, through all the periods of its evolution. Swami Dayanand was naturally influenced in this connection by the authority of the ancient scriptures—the Vedas and the Upanishads—which also happen to be in agreement with the evidence directly offered by experience itself.

I think it is but proper that we should recognise the insufficiency of reason to provide us with logically irrefutable grounds for the belief in God or the supreme Divine power. It has become a common place in modern philosophy to say that the various arguments—the ontological, the cosmological, the teleological, etc.—which are often advanced to prove the existence of God, cannot be expected to establish their thesis beyond all manner of doubt. The Upanishads declare in numerous places that the Brahman is beyond the reach of the senses and the mind.

Our powers are small, and with these limited powers to hope to understand the purpose of the universe and the nature of the Divine being is to make a claim which, if it were not very commonly made, would be held most unreasonable. How can we, with our limited resources, hope to grasp the reasonableness or the teleology of every event that happens in the world? The habit of grumbling and finding fault with the world, because events sometimes happen against our wishes, is an irrational and neurotic trait. It points to the childish desire in us that the world should mould itself according to our standard rather than that we should, as is characteristic of grown up individuals, try to adapt our behaviour to the requirements of the world. In this connection, I cannot do better than quote the following words of Will Durant :

"We must be content with such partial perspectives as can come to a drop of water trying to understand the sea, or an atom charting the Pleiades. There is no great

likelihood that the human brain, which aches at a little calculus, and breaks under the presidency, will ever comprehend this careless immensity of which it is so transitory a fragment." Again,

"The world presents, in my small experience, a neutral scene of suffering and happiness, order and disorder, beneficence and cruelty ... ... Perhaps there is a design in this confusion, as far above my fragmentary understanding as a five year plan would be to an army mule."

I have attempted here to present the view of Dayanand, as regards the nature of the Ultimate Reality. It is definitely opposed to the view of Shankaracharya, namely, that the Ultimate Reality is a pure and differenceless identity. Differences, which are but too evident in the world as we experience it, are in Shankar's view, mere illusions and have no place or status in the Brahman, which is the sole Reality. Ramanuja has also written a commentary on the Brahma Sutras, and his view is, that according to the sutras the Ultimate Reality is not differenceless, but is a complex whole of a number of aspects, indissolubly held together. The commentary of Ramanuja is held by eminent scholars as more faithful to the spirit and meaning of the sutras, than that of Shankaracharya. As a representative of such scholars, we may quote here the opinion of George Thibaut, the translator of the commentaries of both Shankar and Ramanuja on the Vedanta sutras :—

"If now, I am shortly to sum up the results of the preceding enquiry as to the teaching of the sutras, I must give it as my opinion... ...that they (sutras) do not acknowledge the distinction of Brahman and Ishwara in Shankar's sense, that they do not with Shankar, proclaim the absolute identity of the individual and the highest self. I do not wish to advance for the present beyond these negative results...... If, however, the negative conclusions stated above should be well founded, it would follow even from that, that the system of Badarayana had greater affinities with that of the Bhagvatas and Ramanuja than with the one, of which Shankar's Bhashya is the classical exponent."

Ramanuja like Dayanand holds that there are three ultimate realities, matter (achit), soul (chit) and God (Ishwara). Though equally eternal, the first two, i,e., matter and soul are completely dependent upon God, the relation between them and God being conceived as that of the body to the soul. God is the soul, of which material objects and souls are so many bodies. He is thus the soul of souls, the most subtle (Sukshma) principle, as Swami Dayanand puts it. All these three form an indissoluble whole which is called Brahman or Absolute by Ramanuja. Thus Ramanuja like Shankar characterises the Ultimate Reality as a unity but unlike him, he regards the unity as comprising differences and not as a pure distinctionless identity. "Just as a house and the space in which it was loçated" says Dayanand "were neither one and the same, nor separate from one another, so also Jiva and Brahman

were the pervader and the pervaded ; they were not the same and yet not quite separate." It is in this sense that the Upanishads speak of Brahman as the source of all things in the world whether living or non-living. We read, for instance, in the *Manduka Upanishad*, "As from a blazing fire there shoot out by thousands, sparks of the same form, so do the various beings originate from that Imperishable Being, and unto him verily they return."

The Brahman or the Imperishable Being in this verse stands for the whole or the ultimate unity out of which the various beings proceed. But the unity need not be a simple differenceless unity as the Shankarites would have it. It eontains within itself the potentialities for the manifestation of the various orders of being. Just as sparks in some form or the other are contained in the fire, so are the various creatures and objects which make up the world of experience, contained in the Absolute whole.

In the ancient Indian scriptures the term Brahman is sometimes used as an equivalent of Ishwara, the controlling principle of the universe, and sometimes in the sense of the total indissoluble unity. If we keep in our mind the nature of the context in which the word occurs, no confusion need arise.

Duality in some form is implied in all monistic doctrines of the idealistic type. In Vishishta Advaita, as we have seen, the dualistic standpoint is clearly acknowledged and maintained. Shankar is the prominent thinker, in Indian Philosophy, who has preached

an unalloyed absolute monistic idealism, but he had to import the concept of Maya to explain the creation of the multitudinous phenomena of nature as well as the existence of the finite souls. According to Shankar, Brahman is the only reality and He is perfect and above all change. Whence then has the world taken its rise? It is all due to the principle of Maya. What is Maya? Is it an independent principle? No, It is an eternal, unthinkable and inexplicable mystery. It is not real, because only Brahman is real. It is not unreal either, because it is the cause the empirical world. Shankar does not want to acknowledge it as a second principle of reality and yet he cannot altogether do without it. Even though he calls it a mysterious something, it cannot prevent Shankar's system from being tinged with dualism. The organic conception of reality as propounded by Swami Dayanand and a number of theistic thinkers before him appears to be a more satisfactory philosophical position. This, according to most of the modern scholars including S. R. Das Gupta, is the view of the Vedanta Sutras, which only summarize the dominant point of view of the Upanishads.

Shankara's interpretation of Brahma Sutras was strongly criticized by a number of thinkers before Dayanand. Vijnanabhiksu writes in his Sankhya Pravachana, "There is not a single Brahma sutra in which our bondage is declared to be due to ignorance. As to the novel theory of Maya, it is only a species of the subjective idealism of the Buddhists. This theory is not a tenet of the Vedanta."

THE PROBLEM OF EVIL

It is not possible to shut our eyes to the existence of evil in various forms. It will not do to call it an illusion and to dismiss the problem as of no serious importance. All of us have to face pain and suffering in one form or another ; physical pain as well as mental pain. There are selfishness and exploitation and all the evils which result from the egoistic strivings of mankind.

Why is there evil in the world ? Could we not have a world free from evil and imperfection or at least free from the most blatant and galling forms of evil ? If God created the world and if He is perfect, omnipotent and good, it is difficult on that assumption to account for the existence of such a large quantity of evil in the world. Of course it can be said that you cannot have finite existence without the element of imperfection in it, and with imperfection all sorts of evils are bound to appear. If there is to be a world at all, it will have limitations and imperfections. Finiteness and evil are interwined with each other. If everything were perfect, there would be no movement, no change and hence no world either.

We should further take note of the fact that it is pain which provides the stimulus for progress. It is the desire to get rid of pain and imperfection which has made us great in all departments of life. Suffering in some form or other has led people to increase the bounds of knowledge, to establish political and economic institutions, to devise all sorts of scientific

systems, philosophies, arts, moral and religious systems. If imperfection were not there, everything would be static and life would have no zest or value whatsoever.

Granting all this, one can still doubt the wisdom of such an excessive and unnecessary amount of suffering in the human and animal kingdom.

We have already referred to the philosophical view of Swami Dayanand, according to which the Absolute Reality is an organic whole comprising God, souls and matter. The world, as we find it, is the resultant of the interaction of all the eternally existing components. The activity of God, omnipotent, all-wise and all-good as he is, is limited by the presence of the resistant matter and the finite souls. Whatever change takes place is brought about by the divine force working on finite and limited materials. Imperfections and evils from this point of view can be more easily and satisfactorily explained than by any other alternative view. There is a reason why there is evil in the world but the reason does not lie in God. It is due to the co-presence of the limiting and resistance-offering factors. The finite souls gradually emerge out of imperfect and egoistic life into the universal life of love and egolessness. As long as they are at a lower level, each pursuing its own good at the cost of others, there is bound to be a clash, with its attendant pain and suffering. Similarly, the divine has to work its way upward towards higher and higher forms through the recalcitrant qualities of matter. Under these circumstances

imperfections are bound to appear, and can only gradually give way to a relatively greater state of perfection.

The theory of evil as given above can account for evil in its broad outlines. We cannot of course explain each individual case of evil. After all our power of understanding is limited. It is only an all-comprehending and all-knowing intelligence which can understand the cause of each event and happening at the physical and mental levels:

One fact is clear, suffering has not stood in the way of the evolution of man. Great people have always accepted the challenge of evil and forged their way out of hardship and suffering towards the realisation of their objectives. When we fight for great causes, all fear of suffering disappears like fog in the sun. It is only when we think too much of ourselves that suffering assumes a very fearful aspect.

Some of our sufferings, according to Dayanand, are the result of our own actions either in this life or in previous lives ; but no embodied soul can be absolutely free from pain, as much of it is the result of the action of other living beings or the working of the laws of nature. When there is an earthquake, all the people living within the zone of the catastrophe are liable to suffer. This suffering cannot in all cases be said to be due to their own actions. Similarly, connected as we all are with one another, the actions of other people cannot but have good or bad effects on ourselves. We

suffer through the evil actions of our neighbours and even of our own children.

All great men have suffered in one form or another but while ordinary people are mortally afraid of suffering, great and noble-minded people remain calm and do not seem to care for the hardships which they have to face in their lives. They remain happy and cheerful in spite of their sufferings. "It is my firm conviction" says Dayanand, "that the man of virtuous and noble life is everywhere happy (i.e. happy under all circumstances) while a man possessing opposite qualities is always unhappy and causes his own injury." Suffering is the common badge of all living mortals. By the time a person is of forty or fifty years of age, he generally goes through all varieties of pain and suffering, but so great is our recuperative power that as soon as the pain is relieved, we forget all about it almost the next moment, and begin to take part in the festivities of life as if pain had never crossed the threshold of our lives. Even ordinary people can endure all sorts of pain, cheerfully or otherwise, and do not attach much importance to it provided they can keep on living. It is the idea of death which is the source of great fear. If we were assured that we would not die, we would be able to endure much of the hardship of life without flinching.

We have to think again and again that death is not the termination of life. It is being born into a new life. It is through death that things around us move on. Death is the fulfilment of our lives. One who has a strong conviction that we all are travellers to a distant

goal, and we have to pass through many a life and death as we have already passed through countless lives and deaths, need not have any fear of death. Rabindranath Tagore says in Gitanjali, and this has been the belief of the Hindus for all these centuries, "Thou hast made me endless, such is thy pleasure. This frail vessel thou emptiest again and again and fillest it ever with fresh life."

If we succeed in cultivating this healthy outlook on life and death, death should cease to have any fear for us.

Swami Dayanand does not believe that life is all suffering. He holds an optimistic view of life and is of the opinion that there is more of joy than pain in human life. The fact that we keep on clinging to life in spite of pain and suffering shows that in our heart of hearts we believe that life itself is of a great value.

He differs in this respect from the medieval thinkers of India, who laid an exceptionally great stress on the element of suffering in the life of man. To Swami Dayanand, this world is not a vale of sorrow, to be escaped from as soon as possible. Even the conception of never-ending salvation or Moksha has no appeal for him. He thinks that an emancipated soul after an interval of rest in the bosom of the divine, comes back into the world and begins to take part in its activities again. The world is full of joy and beauty only if we have eyes to see them and the disciplined mind to enjoy them. I think Swami Dayanand did the greatest service in restoring the realistic outlook in regard to the joys

and sorrows of the world. He brushed aside, by rational arguments, the commonly held vedantic view that the world is an illusion and, therefore, the earlier we get out of it the better would be for all of us. He asked us to take seriously the affairs of the world, to participate in its joys, and work with enthusiasm for the physical, social and spiritual welfare of mankind.'

FREEDOM OF WILL

Life is a pursuit of values. Man aims at attaining a more satisfactory life than what he is in actual possession of, and this implies a belief in the capacity for free action. Whatever be the theoretical formulation of the problem, in the practical conduct of life belief in freedom is always present. Of course, when we are moved to action by our impulses which sometimes prove too strong for us, or when our bias or prejudice is the determining factor in our activity, we cannot regard ourselves as free agents. Sometimes our impulses or our prejudices act in an unconscious manner, so that we do not feel their presence. In all such cases, we are not really free though through lack of knowledge we may regard ourselves as such. As a matter of fact, for the most part of our lives, our actions are the result of our irrational desires, set habits and fixed attitudes ; but now and then we do exercise a genuine choice, resulting from a strictly rational consideration of the various possibilities of action. It may not be very common, but when this happens, we may call the resulting action as free. A free action is not a motiveless action, as some thinkers have supposed it to be. It is an action in which all

the motives are open to inspection and we choose one of them because it appears to us as the most rational and in harmony with our life-plan as a whole.

The thorough-going determinist is not prepared to allow any freedom to a human being. In the working of the universe what is happening now and in any part of it is the result of what has gone before. The whole play of cosmic forces is a strictly determined one, and this applies as much to the activities of human beings as to the movements of inanimate matter.

We call a particular action free, so says the exponent of determinism, because we do not know its antecedents. We do not regard a child as a free agent. He is a creature of impulses. Gradually he begins to grow. Every step in the process of growth is strictly determined. Each step leads inevitably to the next, but when later on we come across complicated thought processes in the same individual, we overlook what has gone before step by step and imagine that it is all the result of free initiative. It is like looking at a leaf as something separate from the history of the tree. To take the particular action of a man as a complete whole in itself, separated from the rest of his life is naturally to look upon it as a free action, but it is as free as the falling of a leaf is free, if we disregard the forces working upon it.

Schopenhaeur says, "you can act as you please, but you cannot please as you please." What he means is that even when we seem to make a free choice, we

do so because we are so constituted. Of course, the limitation of our being human is always there. One cannot transcend human nature itself, nor can one transcend the laws of physical nature. When we talk of freedom, we always do so on this more or less permanent background. In acting freely we do not cease to be human beings or step out of our specific nature with which we have been originally endowed. The question is, assuming human nature to be specifically what it is, can there be any scope for freedom of action. There can be no such thing as absolute or unlimited freedom on the human plane.

Swami Dayanand believes in the freedom of man to shape his destiny, of course under limitations which the fact of his specific human nature imposes upon him. He says "The soul is free to act, but is subject to God's will in enjoying the fruits of his action." As already indicated, Swami Dayanand does not believe that souls are the creation of God. They are eternal though with limited powers and as such they are free within the limits of their powers and subject to the laws of God.

It becomes impossible, according to Swami Dayanand, to ascribe freedom to the soul, if it is regarded as a creation of God. God ultimately becomes responsible for whatever good or evil emanates from the created soul.

Every teacher exhorts his followers to follow certain rules of right and wrong. It implies capacity for freedom of choice, otherwise there is no sense in asking

a person to shun evil and do good. Moreover, in practical life we always accept the freedom of will. Everybody including the most confirmed determinists and fatalists behave as if they believe in freedom of choice. As Johnson puts it, "all theory is against the freedom of will and all experience for it." Every choice, as already said, is exercised under certain limitations. A choice which I exercise now is dependent upon the extent of my present knowledge of all the factors involved, but it is a choice nevertheless and a free choice to boot, provided it is rational and unbiassed. Some time later my choice may be quite different because in the mean-time my knowledge has increased, and I know more of the situation than I did before. It is by these free choices that humanity progresses from a less satisfactory state of things to a more satisfactory one. At the animal level, evolution depends entirely upon the play of natural forces and naturally, it has taken aeons for it to reach the present stage. At human level, the capacity for free action has been responsible for speeding up the pace of evolution. Technically the concept of freedom is used to indicate the fact that a human being is capable of making a choice. We do make rational choices now and then without the disturbing element of emotion or prejudice. That entitles us to be called free agents. To get deeper than that is not given to human knowledge.

VALUES OF LIFE AND ETHICS

Human beings do not live from moment to moment. They have more or less clear ideas of higher and lower

values, and desire as far as possible to live at a higher plane. This is not always practicable because the impulses may sometimes assert themselves too strongly at the expense of the higher values. Morality or ethics is concerned with the growth of higher modes of living and with distinguishing what is good from what is bad or what is less good. The ethical problem is most important from the practical point of view, and therefore, rational living presupposes a fairly clear knowledge of right and wrong or of the law of Dharma inherent in collective human nature as such.

The Indian philosophers have not, as a rule, written separate treatises on the theory of Ethics and their views of Dharma follow from their metaphysical views of reality. Dharma is generally connected with Rita or the concept of cosmic law, which includes the law of righteousness. According :o Indian thought, the world is a moral order governed by the principle of Dharma. Without Dharma the world would fall to pieces. The victory of Dharma sooner or later is assured in the very nature of things. In this universal world order, each being, animate as well as inanimate, has its own place and its Dharma consists in the fulfilment of its own part in the universal world order. In a society, each person is to perform faithfully the duties assigned to him by his place in society.

In ancient thought the individual was regarded as a part of the social organism and therefore, the question of a possible conflict between the individual good and social good never caused any serious problem to the

Indian thinkers. It was taken for granted that every individual would perform the actions connected with his status of life and when he did act in a selfish way against social good it was because of his inability to resist the strength of his egoistic impulses, and not because he had any doubt about the ethical way of life. It was taken more or less as a self-evident proposition and, therefore, we do not find any serious attempt being made to formulate the theory of Ethics.

Dharma. Dharma, according to Swami Dayanand, comprises all those activities "which contribute to the welfare of all, as, for instance, acts of justice. Actions which go against the good of others are to be looked upon as Adharma, such as injustice". The criterion of Dharma, therefore, is the welfare of the individual as well as that of the society to which he belongs. Rightly understood, the good of society should not come into clash with the good of the individual as such. Similarly, the good of one community should not come into clash with that of another social unit.

The welfare of human beings, according to Swami Dayanand, consists in the realisation of certain values of life. The first important object of value is a strong healthy body full of vigour and vitality. In the modern period in India, Swami Dayanand was the first reformer who laid great emphasis on the health of the body. He deprecated the practice of early marriage prevalent amongst the Hindus and brought home to them the great need for leading a sexually

pure life up to the age of twenty five in the case of young men, and sixteen in the case of girls. No young man or young woman under these ages were to get married. The Vedas, he pointed out, are full of prayers for a long life. In many Vedic verses, there are prayers for a life of hundred years and even for a longer life with all the bodily organs in a healthy and vigorous condition. Weakness was regarded as a great defect ; hence the prayer "Balam asi, Balam mai dehai". In the Upanishads we are told that atma cannot be realised by people who are devoid of vigour and strength. With strength comes fearlessness. An Aryan of the Vedic time put a very high value upon the quality of fearlessness. "May we not be afraid of our enemies" says a Vedic verse "May we not be afraid of our friends, and of what is known and of what is unknown ; may we remain fearless in day time and at night as well, may we be actuated by feelings of friendship for all people".

The body is the last thing to be neglected ; let thy body be like a stone" is the injunction of one of the Vedic verses. Swami Dayanand, wherever he went, spoke upon the need of building up a radiant and robust health.

Along with a healthy body Dayanand laid equal emphasis upon the cultivation of a well-informed mind and a strong character. In the life of a Brahmachari or a student, according to old standards, knowledge and character were looked upon as one whole. One was not divorced from the other. While a student

was required to imbibe all the culture which was available to him, he was equally under an obligation to cultivate great qualities of character, such as purity, (soucha), self-restraint, (Indriya-nigrah) patience (Akrodha), capacity for hard work or perseverance (Dhriti) and the pursuit of knowledge (Vidya, Dhi) under all circumstances.

These may be regarded as individual virtues but man can fulfil himself only in a social environment. Social virtues were greatly emphasised by Dayanand. In fact, he raised a strong voice against the spirit of individualism, which had of late crept into Hindu society. Truthfulness or Satya, an important social virtue, was highly valued by Dayanand. He put this virtue at the base of moral life. He himself was an embodiment of truth and was never prepared to compromise with untruth at any cost. Truthfulness implies harmony between thought, word and deed, and ancient India had set a very high standard in the pursuit of truthfulness. When one follows the path of truth, he puts himself in harmony with the law of Dharma which pervades the universe.

Along with truth go the virtues of Ahimsa, or non-injury, Asteya or non-coveting the things of other people and Kshama or forgiveness and toleration. We are to look upon all human beings as ourselves, and respect their rights. We are not to injure other persons in any way.

Ahimsa, which, in a way, includes the other two virtues also, is not altogether a negative virtue. Mahatma

Gandhi regarded Ahimsa and love as the same thing. When we drive out of our nature the desire to injure others, love is bound to fill the vacuum created by the expulsion of egoism. Ahimsa, therefore, is a virtue, which inevitably leads to love. From not doing injury to others, we find ourselves doing acts of love and compassion for all people.

But Swami Dayanand positively enjoined upon the people to seek social good as a most important duty. It was at his insistence on the virtue of benevolence, that his followers made social welfare a major part of their programme. In fact, Swami Dayanand laid down in one of the principles of the Arya Samaj that "we should not remain content with our own welfare, but we should seek our welfare in the welfare of all." Even an enlightened man or Jnani is espected to work for the good of all. A Jnani who is content with his own anand is like a selfish man who spends his money for himself alone.

All these virtues or values form part of Dharma but Swami Dayanand believed in a well-integrated life, and such a life includes other factors also. These factors have been clearly formulated in the scheme of the fourfold ends of life, namely morality (Dharma), wealth (Artha), enjoyment (Kama) and spiritual enlightenment (Moksha). Enjoyment has a great value in life. Without legitimate enjoyment life becomes an impoverished thing. The old Vedic idea regards pleasure as an integral part of a complete life. Life is full of beauty and joy. They are divine gifts to

humanity and should be accepted in a mood of thankfulness, but the enjoyments are not to be procured at the cost of Dharma, or the law of righteousness. In the hierarchy of the fourfold classification of the ends of life, Dharma has been placed first as the controlling factor in the pursuit of the values of Kama and Artha.

The attainment of the joys of life is not possible without wealth, hence the getting of the means of living a full and happy life is equally a necessary object of human endeavour. In fact, a close connection was perceived to exist between external well-being and moral life. "Poverty is a state of sinfulness", says the *Mahabharata*, in the Shanti Parva ; but it is recognised at the same time that wealth is only a means to an end and not an end in itself. As Dayanand says, "The righteously-acquired wealth alone constitutes Artha, while that which is acquired by foul means is called Anartha. In the *Gita*, it is said that Lobha or greed is one of the paths to destruction, and in *Ish Upanishad* we are definitely told that we are not to covet the wealth of other people. In Hindu Shastras covetousness is regarded as the spring of many evil tendencies of mind, and covetousness means excessive love of wealth, not the legitimate acquisition of the necessary means of living a complete life.

In India for some centuries we turned away, under a puritanical conception of life, even from innocent pleasures, and active participation in the economic well-being of one another. Innocent pleasures are

necessary in life and so is the raising of the economic standard of life by co-operative efforts.

Swami Dayanand regards spiritual realisation or Moksha as the final and the most important value of life. No permanent satisfaction is to be found in enjoyments, in economic goods of life or even in a life of culture. A life dedicated to morality also does not give complete satisfaction when taken all alone. As Sri Aurobindo puts it, "an ethical rule merely puts a bit in the mouth of the wild horses of nature and exercises over them a difficult and partial control but it has no power to transform nature, so that she may move in a secure freedom, fulfilling the intuitions that proceed from a divine knowledge."

Moksha stands for spiritual enlightenment and it is the most completely satisfying experience. All acts of worship and qualities of spiritual living to which reference has been made in Chapter III are meant to produce in man an enlightened state of mind, a state of non attachment, peace, love for all, faith, devotion and never-failing joy. Barring very few individuals who are drawn to a life of spiritual contemplation early in life, the majority of human beings require, for their evolution and growth, all the ingredients to which reference has been made above. The harmonious pursuit of all the objectives of life is what is meant by a well-integrated life.

CHAPTER IV

Social and Political Philosophy

THERE is an intimate relation between individuals and society. We have no evidence to show that in remote antiquity man lived a solitary life. On the other hand, what we know of the history of man strongly leads to the opinion that man has always lived in a social milieu. Aristotle rightly emphasizes the importance of society for the development of an individual when he says that an isolated person is either a beast or a god. He cannot develop human qualities if he lives entirely cut off from society.

Swami Dayanand also was of the view that human beings have always lived in social groups, great or small. As regards the origin of man, he holds the view that mankind are not the offspring of a single ancestor, as is believed by a number of religions. When man appeared on the scene, he was not alone but a large number of persons of both sexes made their appearance at the same time. Thus society was there from the very beginning.

According to Hobbes, man is guided only by self-interest. In the state of nature men were in perpetual conflict with one another. To use his own words, the life of man in a state of nature was "solitary, poor,

nasty, brutish and short." The state came into being in order to put an end to this most undesirable state of affairs and to enable man to lead a relatively secure existence.

That this view is psychologically wrong is now evident to everybody. It is wrong to suppose that man is always moved by egoistic motives alone. Sympathy and fellow-feeling play as important a part in human life as self-interest. Of course, the sphere of sympathy goes on extending with the growth of moral life, but man was never at any time in his history without the element of sympathy or what is also known as the altruistic motive.

Swami Dayanand does not go deep into the question of the origin of society. He describes social life as he found it amongst the ancient Aryans. In Aryan society the conception of the organic nature of society was prevalent ; society was looked upon as an organism, and the individuals formed the organs or parts of that organism. Not to speak of human society, the whole universe was looked upon as a cosmic person uniting all the existent objects into an integrated whole. No individual, therefore, can lead a happy life by concentrating his efforts on himself alone. It is in the interest of each person that other persons should also be healthy, educated, economically well-off and honest. Society can be so built that ultimately there should be no opposition between egoism and altruism.

INDIVIDUALS AND SOCIETY

While an individual should make every effort to make himself perfect physically, economically and

spiritually, he should at the same time bend his energies to bring about the development of other members of society. It is highly essential to develop social sense in human beings and to increase the area of the operation of their altruistic activities. Swami Dayanand lays down an important rule for the guidance of the individual. "A person should not remain satisfied with his own advancement, but should seek his good in the good of all others." It means that each person should look upon himself as a member or organ of society. Just as in the body each organ such as the eye or the leg works for the good of the whole and the whole looks to the interest of each individual part, more or less the same relation should hold between individuals and society. While individuals perform their respective duties, society should look to their needs or to what are also known as their rights. The difficulty arises only when individuals insist exclusively on their rights and society simply on their duties and pays relatively less heed to their rights.

In the above paragraph, society has been compared to an organism. It is an analogy and an analogy should not be pressed too far. In the body an organ owes all its importance to its position in the body. It has no value whatsoever when it is separated from the parent body. An individual, on the other hand, has a personal value and a sense of dignity in himself, and society must take into account and respect the individuality in each person. He has a right to freedom in arranging his life according to his liking and to develop himself in his own way, but he cannot have absolute freedom to do whatever

he likes. A line has to be drawn somewhere. According to Swami Dayanand, "All persons should submit themselves to control in observing social laws meant for the welfare of all people, but they should be free to follow rules of personal welfare." All persons are free to do as they like, provided their activities do not interfere with those of other persons. There are many things which I can do on my own. I should be free to form opinions and to express them freely provided they do not go against well-defined social rules. Society should not restrict my liberty of action and expression in an arbitrary manner. I, as a responsible person, have a right to be treated with dignity and if any action of mine is thought to be against social good, I am not to suffer for it, unless I am given full opportunity to explain my conduct before a court of law.

In modern times, we come across ideologies which regard individuals as having no intrinsic worth of their own. Society is all in all, and its maintenance and progress are the highest end to which individuals may be sacrificed without any consent on their part. These ideologies, whether fascist or communist, regard man as a mere cog in the social machine. He cannot claim any freedom for himself. According to the views of Marx, the soul of man is the product of social and economic forces. The result is that a large number of men live from day to day without attaching themselves to any lofty purpose and disappear in the end like 'rain bubbles bursting in water.'

The Indian culture has always put the highest value

upon human individuality. Spiritual freedom has always been recognized as the highest value. Any social structure built on the ruins of spiritual freedom has no worth whatsoever. The state exists for the individual and not *vice versa*. "For the sake of the soul," says the *Mahabharata*, "You may give up the whole world." We always zealously guarded our spiritual freedom even when we had lost our political and all other freedoms.

It does not, however, imply that the need of social control is not there. Individuals left to their own direction are liable to do things which go against collective welfare. This is especially true in the case of economic interests. At the end of the 19th century, England had to enact certain factory laws to counteract the blind effects of purely economic actions on the part of individuals. In modern times also the government have to undertake social legislation for the protection of wage-earners. Individuals as a rule do not want certain things to happen, but each individual being led by blind economic forces does certain acts which bring about the very thing which he does not want. If there is a rumour that a bank is in a bad way, the depositors, each working in his own interest, and anxious to withdraw his money, may bring about the failure of the bank, which no individual depositor really wants. In these and other similar cases, the action of the government becomes necessary to check the undesirable results of individual actions.

Political action is concerned with the good of society as a whole, and therefore, has to provide a corrective

for individual action, however well motivated it may be. The same consideration applies to the expression of private opinion. A pacifist may feel himself justified in time of war to go about asking people not to take part in the war; but the government would be equally justified in preventing him from inducing soldiers to disobey their officers or from asking people to refuse to be enlisted in the army. It is, therefore, easy to understand the significance of the principle laid down by Dayanand to which reference has already been made. There is a large sphere of action in which the dividual can exercise his freedom and from which the government should remain aloof but there is an equally important sphere where social control is necessary. The individual should willingly consent to submit to control in this sphere.

THE DOCTRINE OF SOCIAL DUTIES.

The Varnas. It is generally said that Hinduism lays a greater emphasis on duties than on rights. In a way it is true. Perhaps it was thought that the right way to effect a reconciliation between individual good and social good was, that the individual should mind his duties while the state should concern itself with the rights of its component members. The doctrine of duties looms large on the Hindu horizon. Under the name of Svadharma, each individual was supposed to be under obligation to perform his or her dharma, and the dharma of each person was determined by the status which he occupied in society or by the relations

in which he stood to other members of society. This ideal of Svadharma comes very near to Bradley's conception of "My station and its duties." In ancient India, the system of Varnas made it easy for a person to know his sphere of action and to perform actions pertaining to that sphere. The society was classified into four broad divisions or classes and every person was supposed to belong to one class or another according to his qualifications, activities and natural aptitudes.

There can be no society without a division of its members according to their different functions or occupations. All types of people are required to form a society. According to the Aryan conception of life, a society is made up of Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas and Sudras. The Brahmins are men of intellectual and spiritual interests, whose main business is to acquire knowledge and spiritual qualities and then to spread them among the members of society. They are the teachers of the young and they are also the conservers and propagators of moral and spiritual values amongst their fellow men. They are the custodians of culture, i.e., all those things which raise human beings above animal level. Naturally such people evoke feelings of love and veneration from their fellow countrymen. Alas, all good things can be exploited for baser advantages and the Brahmins also in later period began to exploit their moral and religious leadership for economic and political power.

Every society requires to be protected against aggression from other societies and this task is performed by

Kshatriyas or men with an aptitude for military life. Such men would like to be trained as soldiers and to them fighting comes as a natural vocation.

Besides being warriors and fighters, the Kshatriyas are expected to be magnanimous and possessed of noble qualities and cultural attainments. Of course, their cultural contributions are not expected to go as far as those of Brahmins and yet we find that, in the era of the Upanishads, many Kshatriya kings made valuable contributions to the growth of spiritual knowledge.

The Vaishyas are the vast mass of the people who carry on the diverse tasks of agriculture, handicraft, industrial, commercial and similar other pursuits on which the economic life of the community depends. They are also expected to be educated and to lead moral and religious life, but the main function of their lives is the production and distribution of articles of economic value.

There was also recognized the fourth class of unskilled workers, or undifferentiated labourers. They were known as Sudras. In modern psychological language we can say that they were people with a relatively low intelligence quotient, who would only perform the ordinary tasks in which no great skill was required. It is the contention of a number of modern scholars that originally there were only three Varnas amongst the Aryans, the Vaishyas including everybody except the Brahmans and the Kshatriyas. The fourth class came to be added later on. According to D. R. Bhandarkar, the term Sudra was at first used for people

who were outside the Aryan-fold. In fact, the meaning of the word Sudra remained undefined even upto the age of Patanjali. It meant anybody who was not a Brahmin or a Kshatriya or a Vaishya, i e., one who was a foreigner. Of course there is a verse in Purusha Sukta in the *Rigveda* in which the various parts of the cosmic person are spoken of as Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Sudra. The word Sudra definitely occurs in that verse. The underlying idea would become clear, if we read the verse along with Rik 2 of this hymn in which it is said, "Purusha himself is this whole, i.e., the universe, whatever has been and whatever shall be." Mankind being a part of the whole, has been divided into four classes, the first three classes representing the Aryans and the fourth class the Sudra—the rest of mankind. It is obvious that the Rik does not refer to the Aryans only but to the whole of mankind. There are many Riks in which only three classes are mentioned. It seems that later on, when the aboriginal people and others were assimilated into the Aryan culture, the fourth class came to be recognized as a part of Aryan community.

In Vedic times the division of society into Varnas was strictly on the basis of functions or occupations. It is quite possible that Varna which means colour, was originally based on distinction of colour between the fair skinned Aryans and the dark coloured inhabitants of those parts of the country into which the Aryans penetrated. It was meant to prevent colour mixture through marital relations. Later on, when the

assimilation of alien cultures began to take place, the Aryans recognized a similar classification outside their own fold and admitted the non-Aryans within the common social body.

Amongst the ancient Aryans in the same family, one member was a Brahmin, another a Kshatriya and so on. Ordinarily, in ancient societies sons followed the vocations of their fathers, but there was no rigidity in this respect amongst the Aryans. In ancient works many cases are mentioned of individuals and sometimes even of groups changing their classes. Yaska in the *Nirukta* gives an instance of two brothers, Shantanu and Devapi, one of whom became a Kshatriya prince and the other a Brahmin priest. Vishwamitra, Janak and many other Kshatriyas were admitted to the status of Brahmins as the result of their possessing Brahmin-like qualities. In the *Mahabharata*, Yudhishthlra, while replying to the question of King Nahush, says, "A person born of a Brahmin family need not be a Brahmin for Brahmin virtues could be found in the sons of Sudra families."

For many centuries during the Vedic age, this system worked in a very satisfactory manner. But later on degeneration set in and Varnas came to be based upon birth, and its functional basis ceased to operate. Two or three centuries before Christ, Megasthanes, the Greek scholar, spoke of the heredity of caste. There were Brahmin soldiers in the army which fought against the forces of Alexander. Caste became established about the time of the Sutras and of Manu and, in greater

vigour, in the time of the Puranas which belong mostly to the period of Gupta kings beginning from the fourth century after Chirst.

After the Varnas or castes, as they came to be called, had become hereditary, the process of sub-division began and so, in course of time, the orignial four castes were divided into myriads of sub-castes with strong prohibitions of inter-marriage and interdining. Once the process began, there was no end to it and the Hiudu society became hopelessly divided into a large number of heterogeneous groups.

The caste system, as it exists now, is a negation of the system of Varnas, or the natural classification of society on functional basis, as it was prevalent in the early Vedic period. It has done the greatest harm to Hindu society, destroyed its homogeniety and unity by dividing it into a number of mutually antagonistic self-sufficient groups. It has brought inequality and a hierarchical arrangement of society, the higher classes claiming to be superior to the lower classes by sheer accident of birth. Caste system never operated in India in the form of social justice. The Sudras, including the untouchables never got their due or a chance to rise in the social scale. The Varna system, on the other hand, was only a classification of the members of society on the basis of their qualifications for various kinds of occupations and functions. There was no bar, though it did not happen very often, on a member changing the occupation of his father, provided he had the necessary qualities for it,

nor did it stand in the way of inter-marriage amongst the various Varnas. This was at least the social ideal when this system was working in a most satisfactory manner. It provided a means for the performance of social duties and obligations by the members of a community thereby contributing to the maintenance of solidarity and stable organisation.

Dayanand strongly denounced the caste system and wanted to re-establish the Varnas in their original purity. Of course, there had been many saints and reformers in the medieval period right upto the 18th century, who attacked the caste system in no uncertain terms. The names of Kabir, Nanak, Dadu and later on Charan Das, Ramcharan, Sahjanand, Bhiku and others in Northern India, Namdev and Tukaram in Maharashtra and Chaitanya in Bengal are well-known to us. They one and all preached against the rigours of caste and admitted men of all castes including the Muslims to their sects. But it was left to Swami Dayanand in the modern period to show clearly that there was no such thing as hereditary caste in the remote Vedic antiquity, when social life was ordered on a wholesome pattern of natural classification. Some of us may doubt the wisdom of keeping the traditional names of the four Varnas in the present circumstances. They have, as the result of long usage, become too intimately connected with hereditary castes, to suggest the idea which Swami Dayanand wanted to convey. There should be no cause for regret if these names pass out of currency as designations of the broad natural divisions in a community and some

other names are used instead. The main idea of Varna system is that people should choose the occupation for which they are best fitted by their natural talents and social training.

How can we bring into existence the Varna system as advocated by Swami Dayanand ? Of course, at present we have no way of knowing who is by nature fitted to be a Brahmin, a business man, a soldier or a technician. There are no reliable tests to this effect and even if we had such tests, we cannot force people to choose one vocation or the other. Each person would choose his own vocation. In Vedic times also, every young person, while he was receiving education in his teacher's *ashram*, was expected to discover his own aptitudes and choose his work accordingly. No one was compelled to take up one occupation or another. In modern society a person in most cases does not get an opportunity to select a vocation of his own liking. According to the requirements of Varna system, two things may have to be done, ample provision for education of all kinds, liberal, technical, commercial, and then to provide work to each person according to his special aptitudes and capabilities. A thorough planning would be necessary for this purpose. It is not difficult to calculate the number of all jobs and avenues of employment in the state at a particular time, including requirements for the tasks of agricultural production. Having done this, the young people are to be educated for all these various jobs according to their natural abilities as shown in their tastes and

preferences. It goes without saying that planning always presupposes the control of population on the basis of available resources in the country. This is absolutely essential for any successful planning.

Along with the choice of a right vocation, there goes the spirit of selfless dedication, which *Svadharma* lays upon an individual. This is the second requirement of the system of Varna. We have to regard our work, whatever it happens to be, as our humble contribution to the service of our community, a devout offering of our worship at the divine altar. On account of lack of planning there is competition all-round instead of a desire to serve. The profit motive naturally drives out the service motive. The ideal of Varna Dharma is that each person is to work for the good of the whole. All occupations, if they are really useful, are equally good means of service to society. Along with this also goes the idea of an equitable distribution of income to the various occupations, keeping in view the peculiar circumstances and the needs of the people engaged in their occupations. This seems to be the idea of the Varna Dharma which Dayanand had in mind and which he wanted to propagate.

The following extract from Max Muller's "Chips" Vol. II, p. 311, is very relevant to the subject under discussion.

"Does caste, as we find it in India, and at the present day, form a part of the most ancient religious teaching of the Vedas? We can answer with an

emphatic 'No' ! There is no authority whatever in the hymns of the Veda for the complicated system of caste; no authority for the degraded position of the Sudras ; there is no law to prohibit the different classes of the people from living together, from eating and drinking together ; no law to prohibit the marriage of people belonging to different castes ; no law to brand the offspring of such marriages with an undelible stigma. We find in it no law to sanction the blasphemous pretensions of a priesthood to divine honours, or the degradation of any human being to a state below the animals. There is no text to countenance laws which allow the marriage of children and prohibit the marriage of child-widows".

EQUAL RIGHTS FOR ALL

Dayanand believed in the equality of man. In the sight of God all persons are equal, and colour, community or sex makes no difference. Of course, equality does not mean sameness or identity. People differ in colour and physique, in intelligence, character, and in a number of other ways ; but they are one as human beings and in a civilized society each person is to be helped to develop his or her personality in a free manner without any handicap whatsoever. Swami Dayanand did not attach any importance to the mere exigency of birth in a rich or poor family, in one country or another. Each person was to carve out his own destiny by his efforts and society was to provide the necessary conditions for his growth and development. Educational opportu-

nities were to be open to all, so that each person could realize the best in him and use his attainments in the service of mankind. No office or vocation was to be denied to any person on the ground of his or her birth, caste, sex or religion. Every person, according to Dayanand, could aspire to the highest office in the land and follow any vocation, provided he had the necessary qualifications for it. It did not matter whether he belonged to the Brahmin or the Sudra class to begin with. It is a painful fact that for many centuries in India, especially since the present caste system came into vogue, all classes of people have not enjoyed equal social justice. A small minority arrogated to itself a superior status simply on account of having been born in noble or high caste families. The Sudras who formed the lowest class in the hierarchy of castes, were subjected to all sorts of social tyranny and denied all opportunities to rise in the social scale.

In the orthodox Hindu society, the dignity of labour is not recognized even now, and it appears strange that all the important and basic vocations which are essential for the stability and the very existence of society, have been assigned to the Sudras and are looked down upon as mean and unworthy occupations. What should one think of a society in which the work of peasants, weavers, masons, potters, carpenters, cobblers, and the whole army of most useful workers, is regarded as unbecoming a person of high caste? Yajnavalkya regards most of these

professions as impure and puts them along with the occupations of prostitutes, gamblers, thieves and drunkards. Thanks to the caste system, the followers of these vocations have led a most unhappy existence through all these centuries. Even the law made a discrimination against these people. They were not allowed to read scriptures or to receive any education worth the name. There were prescribed different measures of punishment for the same offence according as the offender was a Brahmin or a Kshatriya, Vaishya or a Sudra. The punishment meted out to a Sudra was the heaviest of all.

The blood of Swami Dayanand boiled, when he saw these iniquities being perpetrated all around, and he went about from one part of the country to another telling people that the abominable practice of caste and untouchability had no sanction in the Vedas and should be given up forthwith, if Hinduism was to survive. He laid special duty upon the members of the Arya Samaj to carry on a never-ceasing campaign against untouchability and caste system until they were abolished root and branch from the Indian society. Till Mahatma Gandhi took up the cause of untouchability, the Arya Samaj was the only body in India working for the removal of untouchability and other evils associated with caste system.

In the institutions established by Dayanand in his life time and by the Arya Samaj after his death all people can get admittance irrespective of the fact that they are Brahmins or Sudras. No distinction is made

between one caste or another in respect of social relations. It is, however, painful to have to confess that the Arya Samajists too have not been able, as a rule, to put into practice their beliefs about the equality of man in the matter of marriage relations. There are on record some bright exceptions in which inter-caste marriages have been celebrated ; but the majority of the Arya Samajists have not been able to rise above caste restrictions at the time of the marriage of their boys and girls. The caste system is so strongly entrenched that it will take a lot of effort and patience before it gives way altogether. But it does not absolve any right-thinking person from doing his best to eradicate the evil as far as he is personally concerned.

Inter-dining among the different castes is common amongst the followers of the Arya Samaj. One very great reform effected by Swami Dayanand was to throw open the priestly functions to people of all castes. In the Arya Samaj, anybody can officiate as a priest on the occasion of the performance of religious rites and ceremonies. In orthodox Hinduism, the function of a priest has for many centuries been the monopoly of the Brahmins alone.

Equal Rights for Women. In uncivilised societies, physical strength and not moral consideration is the arbiter of the position of its individual units. Even in ancient Greece and Rome, the slaves who formed the majority of the population had no rights worth the name and were treated more or less as beasts of burden. Woman has not fared better

at the hands of man. In all primitive societies and even in some civilized societies in the past women were accorded an inferior status and were at the mercy of their male relatives for their maintenance and the selection of their marriage partners. They had no rights to property and their husbands could discard them and marry any number of wives according to their desire.

In respect of the position of woman in society the ancient Aryans, surprising though it may appear, had set a very high standard. It cannot be said that woman in the ancient Aryan society enjoyed absolute equality with man. It has not been found possible to establish perfect equality in respect of all matters even in the most advanced countries in modern times, because the functions of the two sexes and their physical and emotional equipment are so different from one another. In all fundamental matters the ancient Aryan woman was the equal of man. The performance of the daily and periodic sacrifices was the most important religious obligation in the Aryan home and no *Yajna* was considered complete if the wife did not participate in it. Educational opportunities were open to both boys and girls, and those women who had natural talents freely availed of these opportunities. We come across in ancient literature the names of many highly educated ladies such a Gargi, Maitri and many others who made notable contributions to the knowledge of philosophy and science of those times. When a religious disputa-tion took place between the great Shankaracharya and

the learned Mandan Mishra, the wife of the latter, Bharati, was appointed the judge, and she, like an impartial judge, gave her verdict in favour of Shankar-acharya.

There was no *Purdah* in ancient India. Men and women moved freely in each other's company. Ancient India had a galaxy of noble women the like of whom it is not easy to find in the pages of the history of other nations. The names of Sita, Savitri, Draupadi, Damayanti and a host of others will remain immortal for the nobility, heroism and purity of their lives.

Marriage was celebrated when both the partners were grown up. The girls selected their own husbands, of course under guidance of the parents or elder brothers. Child marriage was unknown amongst the Vedic Aryans. "Let girls, who are virgins", says a verse in the Rig Veda... "are well educated and cultured, fit to bear all the responsibilities of married life and are in the full bloom of youth, who by the practice of *Brahmacharya* (i.e., a life of studentship) have reached a state of excellence and wisdom, which only those of great learning and high virtues can attain, marry husbands of mature age and bear children by them." (Rig Veda, 3-55-17).

Child marriage was introduced into Hindu society when the hordes of invaders began to pour into India at about the beginning of the Christian era, and the honour and chastity of women became unsafe.

It was Swami Dayanand who first revealed to modern Indians the social conditions prevailing in ancient Aryan

society. Of course, later on other scholars came into the field and confirmed the findings of Dayanand about the religious, social, economic and political conditions in ancient India.

Swami Dayanand advocated equal rights for men and women in all matters, in education, in marriage and in the holding of property. He entertained the highest veneration for womankind and often quoted the verse of Manu which says that where women lead unhappy lives, the family is soon destroyed, while that family enjoys perpetual prosperity where women are honoured and lead a joyful existance.

According to him, men should always treat women with affection, courtesy and deference and not with frivolous familiarity as is the case in the West, where men and women address one another in terms of thou and thine.

As regards the age of marriage, Swami Dayanand says in the 4th chapter of the *Satyarth Prakash*, "The best time for the marriage of girls is from sixteen to twenty-four years of age. The lowest age for marriage in the case of a girl is sixteen and for a man twenty-five".

According to Dayanand, a girl should choose her own life-partner and in doing so, she is not to confine herself to the young men of her own caste or varna, as marriage has nothing to do with caste. He therefore strongly advocated inter-caste and even international marriages and, in support of his point of view, he used to quote the following verse of Manu, "Good

women, gems, knowledge, truth, purity, gentle speech, and all arts and industries should be taken from all places".

Under the inspiration of Swami Dayanand, the Arya Samajists established schools and colleges for the education of girls, and carried on an intensive agitation against child marriage. They met with a fierce opposition at the hands of the orthodox whose views at that time were that it was a sin to impart education to girls, and that the parents who did not marry off their daughters before the age of ten years would be cast into hell. The revolution has come slowly but surely. Those very people who once opposed the new ideas are now opening their own schools and colleges for girls. Early marriages are being discouraged in all sections of society.

In the constitution of free India, equal rights are granted to all citizens, irrespective of caste, creed or sex. The stigma of the inequality of rights, which besmearched the fair name of India during the last twenty centuries or so, has been wiped off and it is needless to say that in preparing the ground for this consummation the contribution of Dayanand has been the greatest. He was undoubtedly the first great reformer in modern India to draw attention to the prevailing disparties between man and man and man and woman, and agitated strongly for their abolition. While he laid the greatest emphasis on the scrupulous performances of *Svadharma* or the duties pertaining to one's position in social life, he was no less concerned with

granting, to all people, equality in the rights which were recognized as essential for the citizens of a great country.

SOCIAL CONTROL ; THE STATE

The state is the most important agency of social control. Peace and order have to be ensured in a society so that the individuals may realize their latent possibilities. The individual is an end in himself. It would be disastrous to his welfare if he is used as a means to ends beyond himself, such as the will of a dictator or the prestige of a state. It is rather the business of the state to make good life possible for all its citizens, the good life not as it is determined by the state or any outside authority but the life which seems good to individuals themselves. In a democratic state, no one has the right to impose his conception of a good life upon any individual member. It is thus clear that the state is made for man, to be a means for him to attain the maximum possible satisfaction as member of a given community. In other words, the object of the state is to provide those conditions in which the individual can realise in his life, what are known as higher values such as economic security, health, happiness, beauty, truth, moral goodness and love for others. Such individuals would naturally offer themselves for unstinted service to the state in times of national emergency.

The political tradition of India has been mainly democratic. Monarchs enjoying absolute power have now and then appeared on the horizon but they do

not represent the main stream of political life which has its source in the ancient period of Indian history. The student of the history of India is well acquainted with the existence of republics and limited monarchies in ancient times. Swami Dayanand, true to this tradition, was against the concentration of power in a single person, or an oligarchy of persons, however great and good they may be. He says in *Satyarth Prakash*, "No person should be entrusted with absolute power. The king should preside over the assembly and he should subordinate his wishes to that of the assembly. Both the king and the assembly should be subject to the will of the people while the people in their turn should obey the laws and orders of the assembly."

The function of the state, according to Dayanand, is in the first place to maintain peace and order. In every country and in every age there are always to be found people who are selfish and aggressive and who, left to themselves, would have not the slightest scruple to exploit others mercilessly in pursuit of their ambitions. The state is to exercise a strong check on such people and should not hesitate to inflict exemplary punishment on all law-breakers and offenders. This, however, is not the only function of the state. It has also to look to the economic well-being of the people. In ancient India, this was recognized as a most important function of the state. In Ramayana, when describing the condition of the people of Ayodhya, the poet makes a pointed reference to the fact that there was not a single citizen who went with-

out food or other economic necessities of life. India in the past was a prosperous country, and the state played an important role in ensuring the economic welfare of all. Swami Dayanand, while quoting a verse from *Manu Smriti*, says, "The king and members of the assembly should be inspired with the desire to produce new wealth, protect what has been acquired, increase the wealth of the country, and utilize the increased wealth for the spread of knowledge, the propagation of virtuous conduct, and to help the physically helpless and the decrepit, the students seeking knowledge and the missionaries of religion." Put in modern language it means that it is the function of the state to increase the production of wealth and to use the increased wealth for welfare activities. In other words, the state should be a welfare state or what Mahatma Gandhi used to speak of as *Ramarajya*.

In his discourses, Swami Dayanand laid a great emphasis on the use of swadeshi goods. A country should produce articles of daily use and the people of that country should consider it their religious duty to use them. He advised all people to use swadeshi goods and in this connection drew attention to the praiseworthy trait of Englishmen who seldom used foreign-made articles. This was one of the many original ideas propounded by him many years before the idea occurred to the political leaders of the country. Many followers of Dayanand began to use swadeshi articles much before the Indian National Congress made this idea popular.

When Dayanand went to Jodhpur, he advised the Maharaja to promote the cause of swadeshi cloth produced in the state, and the Maharaja very wisely accepted the advice. "Every one in the service of the state from the Maharaja down to the peon—officers, clerks and the elite of Jodhpur—adopted the khadi produced in Marwar. Thus long before swadeshi became the cry in Bengal, Marwar appeared clad in khadi". (*Life of Dayanand Saraswati* by Har Bilas Sarda).

Chakravarti State. Dayanand in his works frequently refers to the idea of *Chakarvarti* state. He says in *Satyarath Prakash* that upto the age of the *Mahabharata*, India produced many *Chakravarti* kings, whose authority was acknowledged in all places of the then known world, and it appears that he appreciated this idea. What did he mean by the ideal of absolute or *Chakràvarti* state ? One point is clear that he did not mean by this term the colonial form of government on a vast scale. The component units were to enjoy freedom in their respective zones. Only they were knit together into a unity under a sovereign ruler. Most probably it was a federation of autonomous states under a central authority in which they all participated. When King Yudhishtira performed the royal sacrifice after establishing his suzerainty over all the other known kingdoms, the princes from these various countries came to the Rajysua Yajna, in acknowledgement of their partnership in the *Chakravarti* state presided over by Yudhishtira.

Nowadays Bertrand Russel and some other writers have made us familiar with the idea of world government

as the only way for getting rid of the perpetual threat of war amongst the nationalistic states of the world ; but how is this world government or the *Chakravarti* state to be brought about ? Russel in one of his recent books points out two methods. Either a powerful state by its sheer superiority in arms may succeed in imposing its authority over all the states of the world or states concerned may enter into a sort of federation amongst themselves by common consent. In ancient India, as in all countries right upto the present, the right of a stronger country to conquer the weaker countries was recognized as legitimate and the only condition was that the overlordship was to be exercised in a just manner, in the interests of the countries brought under subjection. If the sovereign country used its overall authority in exploiting the component parts, it was considered very sinful, wicked and unbecoming a great and powerful state.

But Swami Dayanand, if he had lived in the present age, would have welcomed the idea of all countries of the world forming an international organization like the U.N.O. for settling disputes amongst nations and for slowly evolving a sort of world government, it is at all possible. The main thing is that there should be some sort of arrangement for maintaining peace in the world. This is only possible if there is a strong organization which can make its influence felt in the affairs of the world.

SOCIAL CONTROL—CHURCH AND EDUCATION

Swami Dayanand speaks of three organizations

which should work in perfect co-ordination if the welfare of individuals in a society is to be insured. The three organizations are the *Rajya Sabha* or the state, the *Dharma Sabha* or the Church and the *Vidya Sabha* or the eductional organization. The state must be strong but its successful functioning depends for the most part upon the quality of the individuals who together make up the state. The work of improving the quality of individuals falls within the sphere of the moral and educational organizations set up for this special purpose. Dayanand did not believe that people became automatically good if their economic condition were improved by the welfare state. Modern states call themselves secular and by secularism it is understood that the state as such has nothing to do with the direct teaching of religion or morals. Swami Dayanand did not subscribe to the secular ideal. As a matter of fact, he was in favour of establishing a special organization to which he gave the name of *Dharma Sabha* which was to look after the moral and spiritual welfare of all the people living in the country. It was to be guided by men of noble and pure character, who could rise above all temptations and weaknesses, and work selflessly for the common good. When Swami Dayanand talked of Dharma he did not mean by it sectarianism or religion of a particular brand. He meant by Dharma broad spiritual and moral principles which are common to all great religions. The teaching of these broad principles through every social agency is essential for the complete well-being of individuals. Human beings are

moved to action, mainly by egoistic considerations. To produce in them an altruistic disposition is not an easy task and requires an all-out effort on a large scale. Apart from the home and school infiuences which affect individuals during child-hood and youth, all sorts of agencies such as church, newspapers, books, entertainments and broadcasting must work continuously amongst grown up people to strengthen in them the habit of altruism, i.e., doing actions from motives of affection, sympathy, goodwill or sense of duty and not simply those actions which immediately or remotely bring some gain to the doer himself. According to Swami Dayanand, all these agencies which aim at improving the quality of individuals at adult level are to be put under what he called the *Dharma Sabha*; the term Dharma of course is to be interpreted in a broad sense, as already indicated.

It should be obvious that the need of such an agency is paramount if we are to keep people at a high cultural and moral level. For lack of such influence even good people are liable to relapse into habits of selfishness and barbarism. Judged from this point of view, the religious churches all over the world are performing a most important service. There is, however, one drawback in the way in which these churches function. They keep the people divided from one another. Instead of laying emphasis upon vital points, they tend to overstress non-essentials as well as the elements of conflict and separatism. The work of different religious organisations has,

therefore, to be harmonized and brought into unison. They should not be allowed to work in a haphazard manner, but their work should be properly organized. This is the function that the *Dharma Sabha* can perform in modern times.

Who should control the *Dharma Sabha* ? According to Dayanand, the *Dharma Sabha* should be manned by the most enlightened and selfless members of the community. In Hindu terminology, the noble-minded Brahmins and the Sanyasis should be in charge of this *Sabha*. Dayanand used the word Brahmin for those persons who possess in them the qualities of learning, wisdom and purity of life. A man cannot be called a Brahmin simply because he is born in a Brahmin family. Brahminhood has to be earned by a hard life devoted to the pursuit of high ideals. Only such persons are fit to be the teachers of youth or guides in religious life.

The Ashrama System. The conception of Sannyasa is an Aryan conception. Hinduism regards the life of man as a forward movement or an ascent into higher and higher stages of spirituality. With this end in view, it divides the life of an individual into four stages or *ashramas*. The first stage is that of a *Brahmachari* or a student preparing himself for his share in the life of the community. It naturally leads to the next stage of married life or the Grihastha Ashrama, when the erstwhile Brahmachari begins to take an active part in the communal life by doing the work for which he is most fitted, and

to the same time the married couple bring forth progeny to replenish the ranks depleted through the death of older people. In all countries these two stages are universally found; but Hinduism does not leave the individual perpetually at the second stage. The normal process of spiritual evolution has to be speeded up after one retires from active life and leaves it to the younger people. Instead of remaining attached to worldly pursuits upto the moment of death, there should come a stage, according to Hinduism, when a person should retire from the normal routine of life and betake himself to a life of spiritual contemplation and study. This is the Vanaprastha stage.

This life of intensified spiritual pursuit may, after some time, lead to the ultimate stage of Sannyasa when a person can veritably live on the universal plane of life. A Sannyasi is above all attachments and temptations, full of love and a desire for service to all mankind without any prejudice and partiality.

When old age sets in and one feels that he has completed his share of social and domestic duties, and when children have been set on their life tasks, it is time to get away from active life and devote oneself to the serious contemplation of one's spiritual goal. Even during one's active life as a householder, one is required to devote some part of the day to religious meditation and worship. But one cannot get, in that period, the requisite amount of a calm and quiet atmosphere for detached religious contemplation. The third stage of life is meant

to provide solitude and freedom from all responsibilities, so that one could devote oneself exclusively to religious exercises and the study of religious scriptures and the company of holy men.

The fourth stage is meant for those persons who have become spiritually enlightened, as the result of sustained efforts made in the second and third stages of life. These enlightened ones can again, if they so wish, take to an active life of disinterested service. They may teach to others the right way of life or they may take part in a practical work of some sort for the uplift of mankind.

It is not necessary that a Sannyasi should don ochre-coloured robes. What is wanted is the spirit of egolessness, profound wisdom and universal love for all people. Such people are the best fitted to be the moral and religious leaders of a community. "People at all stages", says Swami Dayanand, "should take part in spiritual life, but a Sannyasi is the most impartial of all and has the largest amount of time at his disposal as compared to the householders. He can always remain moving among the people and pull them up, even the Brahmins, if they in any way go wrong." Such a person has no fear and no desire for personal gain, and that country is really blessed which can boast of a large number of such selfless persons full of a spirit of universal compassion and benevolence. Only such persons, according to Dayanand, are capable of being put in charge of *Dharma Sabha*.

The Vidya Sabha. While *Dharma Sabha*, according to Dayanand, is to look after the spiritual and moral welfare of adult and grown up citizens, the *Vidya Sabha*, controlling the educational institutions of the state, has for its main function the training of the younger people, so that in due course they may take their rightful place in the socio-political life of the country.

In the second chapter of *Satyartha Prakash* Swami Dayanand lays great stress on the importance of training at home, imparted by the parents of the child before he actually goes to school. This is actually in line with the modern conception which came into vogue many decades later, namely, that the early education received by the child at home up to the age of five or six leaves a more or less permanent influence upon the personality of the growing human being.

The educational institutions are in a way the most important agency for inducing the child into the cultural life of the community. It is through these institutions that a child is equipped in a few years with the literary, scientific, technical and other achievements of the human race. The new generation can thus through education imbibe the culture accumulated in the course of centuries, to which it can add its own contribution.

Swami Dayanand writes, "There should be a state legislation to the effect that nobody should be able to keep his sons and daughters away from school after

the fifth or at the utmost after the eighth year of age. They should be definitely sent to the school. Anybody not doing so should be punished by the state." He is not only concerned with making education in its early phase compulsory. He further wants that "in the school all should be dressed alike, should eat alike and live in the same style whether they are the sons and daughters of royal families or those of poor people. All should be taught to be hardy in life." Some people may think that it is not a practicable ideal under modern conditions ; but it goes without saying that the foundations for equality between man and man should be laid in the schools at the most impressionable period of life. The children reading in schools and colleges should be treated alike, i.e., in the same manner and should be made to realize that they will have to achieve greatness by their own abilities and efforts and should not therefore attach much importance to the financial conditions of the families in which they are born.

All countries in the present-day world attach the highest importance to the education of their youth. Swami Dayanand, even as early as the seventies and the eighties of the nineteenth century, was quite modern in his outlook on education, In fact, so great was his insistence on education, that after his death, his followers thought that the best memorial that they could raise to him, was to establish a high grade school and college. This was done at Lahore in 1885 in the form of a D. A. V. High School and a D. A. V. College. Within a few years after that,

with the late Swami Dayanand Saraswati, and I always showed great respect to him simply because he was such an excellent and learned man that it behoved man of all religions to respect him.

In any case he was such a great man as had no equal in India. Every one, therefore, should mourn his death and feel sorry that such an unparalleled man has passed away from our midst."

SIR SAYAD AHMAD KHAN

Many of us of the last generation owe our intellectual and spiritual emancipation to the teachings of Dayanand. Our heads bow down to him in profound gratitude and deep humility. May his spirit continue to inspire the people of India for a long time to come!

CHAPTER VI

What is Hinduism ?

Now that we have had, in the previous chapters, a brief survey of the evolution of Hinduism from the early times down to the present, including the contribution of Swami Dayanand to its modern phase, it will be worth while to try to understand what Hinduism really stands for.

It is not easy to define Hinduism. A Hindu intuitively feels what it is to be a Hindu, yet he may find it difficult to give a verbal expression to his feeling. A foreigner, especially, finds it difficult to understand Hinduism on account of a great diversity of beliefs and practices to be met with in Hinduism. Hinduism has a very long period of growth behind it. It cannot be traced to any historical founder as is the case with Buddhism, Christianity and Islam. We can, however, say that Hinduism had its beginning in the Vedic period, and since then it has been transforming itself according to the needs of the times and on account of its contact with various outside infiluences. It has grown like a living organism, changing and at the same time maintaining its continuity with its past phases. A grown-up person is very much different from what he was at his early stage, and yet he is the same person. No living

thing can remain static, and the same can be said of Hinduism or of any other living religion or culture.

Hinduism is an English expression formed out of the word Hindu, and means Hindu culture. It is equivalent to Hindu Dharma understood in its broad sense. The word Hindu is not an Indian word and is not to be found in any Sanskrit, Pali or Prakrit dictionary. It occurs, however, in Persian dictionaries along with its derivatives. The word Hindu is the Persian form of Sindhu which is the Sanskrit name of the river Indus. The Persians could not distinguish S from H and so pronounced Sindhu as Hindu. The word Indus is a further corruption of the word Hindu. From Indus we have the word India, the name by which our great country is known all over the world at the present time.

There is reason to believe that up to the advent of the Muslims, there was probably no common Indian name for the whole of the country. In the Smritis we come across the word Aryavarta but it stands for India to the north of the Vindhya mountains, over which the Aryans had extended their sway by that time. The word Bharat Varsha seems to have been used, at some, period for the whole of the country. We are told in the Vishu Purana (Book 2, Chapter 3) that "the country which lies to the north of the ocean (समुद्र) and to the south of the Himalayas is called Bharat Varsha. It is inhabited by descendents of Bharat". Amongst the rivers mentioned as flowing through this country are Narbada, Sarsa. Tapti and Godavari, which are the rivers of South India. It, however, appears that at various times, on account

of the lack of political unity in the country as a whole, the name was not as well known as for instance the name India is known at present; "The natives of India can scarcely be said to have a word of their own," says Encyclopaedia Brittannica, Ed. 9, "by which to express their common country." Hieun Tsang, in his travels, expresses more or less the same view. "On examination," he says, "we find that the names of India (Tien-chu) are various, and perplexing as to their authority. It was called Shintu, also Hien-tau. But now, according to right pronunciation, it is called In-tu" (Beal. Buddhist Record of the Western World Volume I, pp. 69). He says further that people of this country call themselves by different names according to the province to which they belong. This lack of the use of a common name for the whole of the country from the Himalayas down to Cape Comorin can be explained by the fact that the whole country was divided into small kingdoms and was not alway united politically into a single territorial unit. If ever a monarch succeeded in conquering the rest of the states and establishing his hegemony over them, it did not last long and soon after his death, if the successors happened to be weak, it fell apart again into separate independent states. The Moghal emperors brought some political unity, but the whole country really became politically united only during the regime of the British.

There was a close connection between Persia and India in old times at about the 6th century B.C. The region round about the Sindhu and other rivers was known as Sapta Sindhu and then simply the Sindhu

after the name of the largest of the rivers in that part. The Sindhu lent its name to the country through which it flowed. The Persians pronounced Sindhu as Hindu. This region was the only gateway for people from all parts of India to go to foreign countries for trade and other purposes. They were all called by the name of Hindus, because they all passed through the Sindhu or Hindu region. The Persians naturally could not discriminate the people of one part of the country from that of another. For them all were Hindus. Whichever tribe entered India from outside, whether Turk, Pathan or Moghal, it called this country by the name of Hind, the people as Hindus and their language and culture as Hindvi. The people of India accepted this name for themselves. In the first place, they had no common name, very much in use, for the whole country, and secondly the name Hindu could be used for all peoples of the country whether Aryans or non-Aryans, as it had nothing to do with any particular community or religion, such as the word Aryavarta denoted. The outsiders still call all Indians, whether Hindus, Muslims or Christians, by the name of Hindu.

We must, however, keep it in mind that in spite of political diversity, the fundamental unity of the country was recognized from times immemorial. Culturally and geographically the country was one. The sacred places of pilgrimage were spread over the whole country and it was looked upon as more sacred than heaven itself. Even the gods are described as wishing to be born in this sacred land. Though on

many occasions, before the advent of the British, the country was divided into a number of separate political units, each ruling prince had an idea of the country as a whole, and the more powerful among them strove to establish their supremacy over the whole country or over a major portion of it.

Most of the people who came from outside before the advent of the Muslims were gradually absorbed into the body of Hinduism or Hindu culture. They embraced one or other of the religions prevalent in the country. The Muslims, however, when they came to India, stuck to their religion and did not adopt any of the religions of the country such as Vaisnavism, Saivism etc. As they were foreigners to begin with, they did not call themselves Hindus. The word Hindu which at first had only a territorial significance, began, in course of time, to mean a person who followed a religion other than that of Islam. The people of the country became divided into Hindus and Muslims. The word Hindu acquired a religious or cultural connotation and it continues to bear this meaning up to the present times. But it is strange that a Muslim or a Christian who would not like to be called a Hindu, has no objection to his being called an Indian, though the word Indian is only a changed form of the word Hindu.

Hinduism, on account of reasons given above, has come to represent the culture of the vast mass of the people of India, who follow one or the other of the Indian religions. It accounts for the difficulty to define Hinduism. We find in Hinduism all sorts of

beliefs from the crude to the highly evolved religious conceptions. Though Hinduism gives shelter to all these beliefs, it would be wrong to suppose that it regards all of them to be of equal worth. The people who hold the lower order of religious beliefs have to be pulled up gradually to the higher one. It is true that for the last so many countries, our religious leaders allowed the common people to remain satisfied with most crude and childish religious beliefs. They did not make any effort to educate them in the right conceptions of religion. It was not because there was an absence of profound religious conceptions and ways of spiritual attainment. There were plenty of them but the masses were not thought fit to be instructed in those ideas and so they were regaled with silly childish things. "In the name of religion, says Prof. Radakrishnan, "we have carefully protected superstitious rites and customs. It is necessary for the Hindu leaders to hold aloft the highest conception of God and to bring about an improvement in the conceptions of the common people, as well as in the religious places which are visited by millions of Hindus every day".

Swami Dayanand was probably the first Indian reformer, in the present times, who discriminated between the true and vital religious conceptions and gross superstitions which abound in Hinduism, and wanted to preach the life-giving doctrines of Hinduism to all people, the educated and the uneducated alike. In his opinion, the common people, even though uneducated, possessed intelligence enough to grasp and to act upon the higher

conceptions of life, if they are rightly presented and explained to them. This is what the religious leaders owe to their followers in the present era.

We have therefore to judge the nature of Hinduism not from its lower manifestations but from its higher forms as found in the Vedas, the Upanishads, the Gita and other similar ancient and modern works. It would, however, be totally wrong to equate Hinduism with any or all of its current institutions, beliefs and practices, as some of the western thinkers have tried to do, identifying it sometimes with caste system and untouchability, sometimes with child marriage and so on. We are now trying to demolish many of these antiquated institutions and set up better ones. Every human device has got to change whether it is a form of Government or a religion. Even Buddhism, Christianity and Islam have changed as indicated by the appearance of innumerable sects, in each of them, in course of time.

As already said, Hinduism has been changing itself from time to time. It had one form in the Vedic period, and then, on account of its contact with other cultures, some backward and others civilised, as well as on account of its internal development by the rise of various reform movements, it was transformed into current Hinduism by about the beginning of the Christian era. It remained more or less the same till about the middle of the 19th century. In the modern period it is once again renewing itself on account of its contact with western ideas, but more than that, on account of the work of great social and religious reformers like Raja Ram Mohan Roy,

Swami Dayanand, Swami Vivekanand and others. It may be called the period of Hindu renaissance.

In spite of these changes, there is a continuity in Hinduism as is the case with all living organisms. But while changes take place in Hinduism, the old values are retained and fused with the new ones. We can, therefore, say that the precious things of the Vedic age and the succeeding ages all live in present-day Hinduism. There should be no difficulty in understanding the nature of Hinduism if we clearly grasp its inherent genius. It insists on maintaining continuity with the past, though it leaves the people of any particular age free to reject whatever is unwholesome in its traditional heritage, and to accept whatever helps the process of adaptation to new circumstances. This is what we find in the case of a growing organism. Even though an individual changes in a most remakable manner as he grows older, he, nevertheless, feels his identity with what he was at his early stage.

We know what Hinduism had been in the past and what it is in the present. We cannot say definitely what form it will assume in the future. It will be for the coming generations to introduce modifications made necessary with the passing of time. We have compared Hinduism with a growing organism, but there is one very important difference between a physical organism and a culture or religion. Every living organism has to decay and die after sometime. A culture, on the other hand, need not die if it knows the art of modifying itself and adapting itself to changing circumstances. Rigid and

inflexible cultures cannot keep themselves alive under changed conditions. We owe many things to different sources but we have assimilated them and made them an intimate part of our cultural organism. We changed our institutions when we found that they were no longer useful. Hinduism is a progressive and flexible culture and so it has lived on during all these centuries, when most other cultures have perished altogether.

Hinduism is something unique in the history of the world. It is a living culture rather than a religion as usually undersood. If by religion we understand a particular mode of worship or belief, we cannot, in that case, call Hinduism a religion. It gives shelter to many religious views, but they all trace their ancestry to the earlier phases of this great cultural movement. The continuity of development, as already stated, represents the genius of Hinduism and a key to explain its essential nature.

We may, if we like, regard Hinduism as a scheme of life. It is perhaps what culture really means. The Hindu scheme of life leaves a man free to think for himself while providing him with a background in the form of a long tradition hailing from the Vedic times. We can reject what is undesirable and retain what is valuable in this age-old tradition or add new elements, according to our present-day or future needs. Many people, we are sure, would prefer to be guided by a flexible scheme of life which Hinduism represents, than by a set of rigid, unalterable dogmas which lose their importance with the passing of time.

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